

The
SPLENDID
RASCAL

George Challis




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THE SPLENDID RASCAL

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CHAPTER I

HOW MADELIN REAPED

THE rain dropped suddenly upon Antwerp and since there was no wind to drive it aslant or toss it into drifts after the crash of the first onset, it continued with a steady roar so heavy that to Louis Madelin the house seemed to quiver. The space between the window and the river was penciled with solid gray lines, and the crowded masts upon the old Schelde became as obscure as a forest by starlight, but still he could distinguish, very softly, the red-orange and the deep blue-purple which banded the hull of that gallant fore-and-after he had been watching as the evening drew down. He had not stirred in his chair for a whole hour, yet his attitude was not one of complete relaxation. His knees were not crossed and his hands rested on the arms of the chair; he was bolt erect as some old soldier who has stood watch so many times that his back is stiff as a board; like an old soldier's, too, was the poverty of his attire. The mud of the last dirty crossing was deep on the heels and the soles of his shoes; his black hose were clumsily patched—the unmistakable needle-work of a man! On the right shin the edges of a long slash had been drawn together, and over the other knee a hole of

some size had been pulled up in the same careless fashion, making a puckered tuft. His knee-breeches and long-skirted coat were of a stout gray woolen cloth, rubbed threadbare at the wrists and the front of the thighs; and the linen collar of his shirt, of less ample spread than customary, was rumpled and frayed at the edges by many washings. Yet his costume was not without a touch of distinction, for a knee-length black cloak swept from his shoulders and the broad-brimmed black hat which lay on the little table beside his chair was set off with a great red feather which curled about the high crown. On the same table rested his sword. It was not one of the great cut-and-thrust rapiers of the period but that much shorter and lighter weapon which had recently been introduced by the great French fencing masters and designed for thrusting only, having a quadrangular blade which tapered to a needle-point.

In person, he was a slender fellow made as light and sinewy as the weapon which he carried. His hands were long and bony, the fingers square-tipped and large at the joints; his neck was thin and when he turned his head, cords stood out strongly; his skin was sallow, the cheeks hollowed and sickly, the nose very thin and slightly arched, and beneath a short black mustache was an habitually compressed mouth. Yet, as in his dress there were contrasting features, so in his face the appearance of weariness and ill health was set at naught by a pair of very keen and restless black eyes; and his lips, though thin, were a bright red. In age he might be of any year between thirty and thirty-five; when his eyes were lowered he seemed older, when they were raised he was young. When he looked up, his aspect was penetrating and cheerful; when he looked down one noticed a long scar which, beginning high in the center of the forehead, crossed the right eye and continued to the cheek-bone, and this scar, together with the sunken cheeks and the lifeless complexion, gave him

at once a solemn and an ominous air of suppressed ferocity.

Now his sharp ear distinguished through the drum of rain a noise upon the stairs and then along the hall floor. At this, a faint smile appeared on his lips, and these smiles of his were very close kin to malicious sneers. A light rap came at the door; then by a draft which stirred through his long, thin black hair and by a whispering sound of skirts, he knew that a woman had entered the room. He did not stir, however, but continued to look out through the window, noting that the weight of the downpour was diminishing to a thinner gray and that a wind which was beginning to blow down the river caught up the rain in thick gusts and left comparatively clear gaps between. Through one of these he saw the bright picture of the fore-and-aft vessel which was nearest him on the river, admired again the brightness of its orange and purple-blue, the huge, single mast, the lowered gaff and the absence of a boom, the lofty poop whose carvings were obscured to a tracery of indefinite but graceful pattern.

"My lord," said the girl's voice, "it is I, Margaret."

"I am not a lord," said Louis Madelin, without turning.

The door closed softly, and he bit his lip, being convinced that his rude reception had made her leave the room, but presently a light step began to approach him, and that disagreeable smile appeared again upon his lips. She came to the back of his chair. The smell of the rain upon her cloak was sharp in his nostrils and he was aware from the quick corners of his eyes of her white hands resting just above his shoulders.

"Is this kind?" she asked, her voice trembling a little, and when he did not answer she added suddenly: "Ah, it is because I am late. But look!"

And taking a bag from beneath her arm, she poured forth on the table a little heap of silver coins and one

golden one, together with a little silver pitcher covered with raised work rather quaint than pleasant. Madelin did not see these details at once, but he caught the glimmering of the metals and a light no less bright came in his eyes.

"If father should learn," cried the girl, "it's the end of me. But," she added, "still not a word for me? Is it not enough, then?"

And she peeped around his shoulder at his face.

"I have waited since yesterday," he said at last.

"I was watched. I could not stir. Ah, you are so hard with me, Louis!"

"As for the money," he said, summoning a fine and quiet indignation, "take it with you when you go, and leave me when you will. My fortunes are fallen far indeed, but if I must pay for the little sum I have asked to borrow from your wealth by enduring insult and delay ——"

"Insult? Louis, Louis, you will drive me mad!"

He rose and bowed to her. She was a pretty creature not much past her twentieth year, with pink round cheeks, bright eyes, and a color which now came and went with her distress.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "I never argue."

A thousand protests showed in her eyes, trembled on her lips, but all were lost and dissolved in a flood of tears in the midst of which she threw herself into a chair, bowed her head into her arms, and sobbed bitterly. Louis Madelin used this interval to survey the little treasure on the table, noting and weighing every coin with a single glance. He nodded with satisfaction, then he laid his hand on the shoulder of Margaret.

"Alas," he said, "broken fortunes make suspicious minds; it may be that I have judged you too harshly ——"

"Indeed, indeed, Louis, you have. Do you think that I dream of anything night or day except how I may please you?"

"Hush, child, all is forgotten and forgiven. But as for this dirt ——" and he gestured disdainfully to the table.

"Keep it; it is yours. It is not much; it is not a thousandth part of what I would give you. But only be kind to me."

He leaned and touched her forehead with his lips; instantly the tears ceased, and her smile shone.

"You are still firm to go?" he asked her.

"Oh, around the world, if you'll take me!"

"And leave everything?"

"Everything is nothing!"

"This is like a play," murmured Madelin, but he added tenderly, aloud: "Be ready at dawn to-morrow."

"At dawn!" she echoed, between terror and delight. "And what shall I take?"

"Your dear self only. Now go home at once; make all ready; sleep if you can; and expect me when the dawn begins."

"How shall I live till you come?"

He raised her and led her to the door.

"First, Italy. Keep your mind on that. There is a prince in Rome who will give us shelter. After that, we sail whatever way fortune blows us."

She threw herself into his arms.

"Haste—silence—at dawn," he said, disentangling himself and passing her through the door. "God keep you, dear."

When she was gone, he sank into a chair and broke into noiseless laughter so hearty that the tears ran down his face. He wiped them away, swept the money from the table into a capacious and empty wallet, buckled on his sword, and clapped the wide hat upon his head. He then took up a bit of glass, surveyed himself in it without satisfaction, and finally left the room in haste. On the stairs he encountered his hostess leading up a

little girl with cheeks of apple-red. Her own color flamed as she saw Madelin, and crying, "I have talked to my husband about your score, sir; we must have money; we are not rich folk!" she stretched forth to bar his passage down the steps an arm thicker and stronger than the arm of a blacksmith. Madelin regarded it not. He took out his wallet and drew from it a handful of silver of which he dropped a broad, new-minted coin into the tiny palm of the child and patted her straw-colored hair while she gaped at him.

"Score?" said he to the hostess. "Score? I have had a legacy, madame. I shall pay you twice over in a day or so. Foot up the bill and have it ready for me!"

The heavy arm fell from before him and he went down to the street with that faint and sneering smile again upon his lips. He found that the rain had abated to a soft showering mist, but this cessation had not been noticed by half a dozen sailors who had taken refuge under the wide, projecting eaves of the inn. While they waited, dice had been produced and now on the compact, half-wet sand, they were playing a furious game with little stacks of money before them and each man on his knees. They were rough fellows in true sailor togs with the reek of salt sea and tar about them, weather-browned faces and great blunt hands. Madelin could only explain this affluence by presuming that they had recently come in from a long voyage and had received their pay, for not only was there a quantity of silver, but he saw also the rich glimmering of more than one gold florin. Instantly he was on his knees among them, straining his eyes to make out the dice through the increasing darkness.

He bet a coin and lost it, bet and lost again, but then the dice-box coming to him, he slipped out the little white cubes and, with the most exquisite sleight of hand, introduced some of his own which he had

previously drawn from his pocket. They were charmed dice, it seemed. He won and won again; in a trice a fever took the little circle—they pushed out their money in stacks and lost it as fast until the roar of a new downpour interrupted the game and made them flatten themselves against the front wall of the building to escape from the wet. Madelin used that moment to restore the true dice to the box while he returned his loaded ones to his pocket and dropped a heavy handful of money into his wallet. A gust of rain rattling in their faces sent the sailors scurrying around the corner of the building to hunt for more secure shelter, with even their losses at dice forgotten for the moment. But the heart of Madelin was too much warmed by his recent gains to mind a sprinkling of water, and he remained at his post, humming, until the shower stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and a changing wind began to wash the sky clean of clouds. There was no great increase of light, however, for the night was now closing over old Antwerp. Only the river gleamed brightly with the hulls of the riding ships doubly black against it while the orange and blue of the pleasant yacht near by became dull ghosts of color.

Two men now approached from that vessel and it was to view them more closely that Madelin remained in his place. For while one was soberly garbed the other was as gay as a flower garden in summer with a sweeping cloak of plum-colored velvet and his breeches set off with a quantity of gilt ribbons which fluttered from the knee to the hip. His cloak was cocked out behind by the end of the long rapier upon whose hilt his hand rested as he walked, and he swaggered the sword as he passed. He came near enough for Madelin to be aware of an athletic and wide pair of shoulders, a handsome face with a great fall of yellow and carefully curled hair about it, and a commanding presence. He was young—not more than twenty-seven or eight—but

he carried himself like one old in the exercise of authority. He was giving directions to his companion but all that Madelin heard as they went by was, "And when you're ashore, keep a clear hawse, Tom."

"Ay, ay," said the other, and with a sort of clumsy salute turned and went back toward the ship. The man in the velvet cloak also turned, but it was only to run his eye lovingly over the graceful lines of the ship, standing with his hands on his hips so that the cloak spread wide behind him, and whistling a strange air of a kind which Madelin had never heard before. It was pitched in a minor key and ran monotonously high and thin; the rhythm was as strange as the notes but with a strongly recurrent beat which the tall man tapped out still further with the toe of one shoe which was set off with a high heel, stained the brightest blood-red.

Madelin watched and listened while he computed the price of that velvet cloak, of the design on the border heavily worked with silver thread, and of the great golden brooch which held his cloak together at the throat; for the metal shone even in that twilight and when he raised his hand to settle his hat a moment later, a jewel gleamed.

This was enough and more than enough for Louis Madelin. He waited until the big stranger had passed on a short distance up the street with his swaggering step that told of a footing more free on the pitching deck of a ship than on firm land; then Madelin went in pursuit, stepping with a long and noiseless stride and keeping close to the edge of the houses whose shadows and the coming of the night fairly secured him from a chance backward glance. In this fashion he followed while the man of the sea turned into a narrow lane so fenced in with houses that its mouth was like the opening of a hole. When he found his quarry entered into this place, Madelin increased his pace, though without running, and rapidly overtook the

stranger of the cloak who, striding on in that awkward seaman fashion, with his high-crowned hat and his cloak swishing behind his shoulders, looked like a giant among the shadows. Madelin, passing, shouldered him heavily, and in return the sailor, without a word, knocked him down.

CHAPTER II

HOW MADELIN SOWED

STRANGE things had happened to Madelin in many lands but nothing as ignominiously humiliating as this; he had taken the seaman for a lumbering hulk, but in spite of his size, the big fellow had struck as a cat strikes, and with the power of a bear. He now leaned over Madelin who lay half stunned, with his head and shoulders propped against the wall, but since the light was so faint he muttered in English: "A drunken Dutch pig!" and seizing Louis Madelin by the hair of his head, for his hat had fallen off, dragged him to his feet. The pain cleared the mind of Madelin. With the edge of his hand—an Italian trick which had served him before—he struck the arm of the big man near the wrist, momentarily numbing his hand so that it lost its grip. As he sprang back, their swords came out at the same instant and the giant lunged. Had there been a clearer light he would have run Madelin through the throat and ended that adventurous career on the spot; as it was, he missed his mark, and the long blade of his rapier gleamed beside the face of Madelin. The latter lunged home in turn but his opponent, recovering himself with wonderful agility, parried sharply and thrust again.

By the first touch of an enemy's steel it was the boast of Madelin that he could tell the nationality of a foe or at least the school in which his sword had been trained, but now he was bewildered, for the man of

the velvet cloak attacked him in the style of half a dozen lands in turn. He took advantage of his great length of reach with the stiff arm of an Italian master, but he had the light foot of a Frenchman, the precision of a Spainard, and withal used his edge with a murderous adroitness which suggested the saber practise of a Pole; and in addition he pressed his attack with the steady, cool temper of an Englishman. So that in the first assault he drove Madelin like a leaf before him and only the unfathomable deftness of the latter's feet kept him out of the touch of death. He danced backward into a more open area where the light from three windows crossed and splashed the muddy ground with orange-colored blotches.

"Friend, friend," said Madelin, "hold up your hand. You are not the man I thought; go in peace, go in peace, in God's name."

"Peace, you rascal!" cried the other. "Get to windward if you can, for if you stand to me like a man, damn me if I don't make a thief less on land!"

The last was through his teeth as feinting in low tierce, he thrust in high carte.

"Then," panted Madelin, as he made his parry, "you shall pay for discretion with a quart of your best blood."

The fight, which in spite of all that had passed had consumed hardly thirty seconds, now took on a different aspect. Madelin no longer retreated, but having by this time learned something of his adversary's system of fence, and with an open space which favored his strange dexterity of foot, he fluttered in and out around the seaman like a butterfly around a flower, eluding the net that strives to catch it. The big man, who now began to curse through his teeth as he saw that he had encountered a master, worked faster than ever; but the very wind of his cuts and the effort of his lunges seemed to waft Madelin from the point of

danger, while the latter drifted here and there, with his left hand poised daintily behind him, and his smallsword as steady as a high light on a granite block. He was still on the defensive, however, until the man of the cloak followed a sweeping cut at the head with a lunge at the leg. Then Madelin, swerving to the side past the darting point, stepped in and out as gracefully as a sparrow picks at a seed and looks up again at the hawk overhead. But when he leaped back his steel was red far up the foible of the blade. The big man dropped his own weapon, clapped his hand to his body, and sank in the mud, coughing.

Madelin sheathed his rapier and ran in.

"The devil take me!" he said. "You leaned to my thrust; it's a palm's breadth deeper than I intended. How is it with you, my friend?"

"I am stung deep enough," said the other thickly. "If I'd had you on a ship with no room for your damned dancing—but get help—all may still be well ——"

"Help!" shouted Madelin, "help!"

Voices answered; a window was cast open and a door thrust wide; but Madelin leaned again beside his victim.

"You still must pay toll of another kind," said the grim thief, and he tore the brooch from the throat of the fallen man and the ring from his finger. Then spying a heavy purse which was attached to the belt of the seaman with two leather thongs, he cut them with a touch of the fallen rapier which lay beside them.

"All but the ring," gasped the wounded man. "In the name of God, fellow, not the ring! I'll redeem it at your own price ——"

"Farewell!" said Madelin, and as a dozen forms were now hurrying toward the place, he vanished instantly in the darkness at the farther end of the alley.

When he reached the street on the farther side, he went on with a light step, panting a little from his

exertions, but singing to himself now and then as though he had just completed some worthy and memorable action. He weighed the purse with a judicious hand, nodding to himself complacently, and then jingled the contents or rattled the handfuls of coin which were already in his pockets, as though his heart were not a whit the heavier because he had just deceived a foolish girl, cheated some honest sailors, and finally stabbed and perhaps murdered a stranger against whom he could have had no grievance.

He continued in this lively fashion until he reached a tavern at a distance of nearly a mile from his own quarters. He entered, crossed the great public room where three or four Flemings were drinking on a wager with stuffed red faces and watering eyes, and so opened a side door and came to the foot of a narrow stairway. Here a lantern hung in a wrought-iron frame and by its light he saw a gray-haired man of much dignity who stopped him and demanded what his business was there.

"My business," said Madelin, "is with one who is greater than any nobleman on earth."

The other eyed him keenly for a moment.

"By what warrant and authority," he said, "do you come?"

"By this warrant and authority," said Madelin, and showed the stolen ring which he had slipped upon his finger. It was his own first opportunity of viewing it in a clear light and he saw that it was a blood-red ruby of great size and brilliance set in the most massive gold.

"Ah?" said the guardian, looking first on the magnificence of the gem and then on the ragged and patched clothes of Madelin.

He stepped back, and Madelin climbed to the top of the flight where he knocked twice at the door which stood there, made a slight interval and tapped again.

The guard below, who had been watching narrowly all this while, now nodded and turned away; but it was still a long moment before a harsh voice demanded from the inside of the room: "Who goes there?"

"A friend," said Madelin.

"In what name?"

"Worcester."

There now followed the noise of bolts being drawn and the door was opened by a young man of scarce thirty years with a swarthy skin, harsh features, and an eye half bold and half weary—the eye of a pleasure lover. He was upward of six feet in height, but he carried himself with much grace and he now bade Madelin enter, speaking with a pleasant, deep voice. The latter had been busied, while he waited at the door, in transferring his small treasure from his pockets to the purse and he now stepped into the chamber carrying the purse in one hand and his hat in the other. He found himself in a small room which was lighted by one heavily barred window. The furnishings were scanty and of the most ordinary nature. There was a narrow bed at one side, two or three books on a small table in the center of the floor, and a few chairs. He had barely time to note these things before he dropped upon one knee and lowered his eyes.

"You have come from Hyde, I suppose," said the other, closing and locking the door again. "I have been expecting his letter; there's no pleasing that man!"

He turned, and seeing Madelin on his knee he tapped his bony fingers against his chin and looked curiously down on his visitor.

"Rise, my friend," he said, and he added not unkindly as Madelin obeyed, "it may be that you are a messenger on your own account."

For now he was shrewdly taking stock of the dilapidated condition of Madelin's vesture.

"Tell me your name, sir," he added, seeing that

Madelin was incapable of speech, "and in what way I can serve you."

"Sire," said Madelin, in a barely audible voice, "my name is Louis Madelin."

"I have seen you before, Mr. Madelin?"

"At Worcester, sire."

"Ah," said Charles, frowning a little. "If your luck has been as bad as mine since we looked at Noll on that damned day, let's talk no more of it. But, Mr. Madelin, you are in need, and having heard, I know not where, that I was in Antwerp, you have come to me for relief. Is it that? Come, let me hear. Your estates were wasted for my father's cause and mine. You have wandered in beggary ever since."

"It is true, sire," whispered Madelin, still unable to raise his eyes from the floor.

"I acknowledge the debt," said Charles Stuart solemnly, "and if I can serve you now, speak out. Odds-fish, man, you are as white as though I were a girl and you come to ask my hand. Speak out, but remember that there are few beggars poorer than a king without a country."

Madelin, in the meantime, had been striving to bring words to his trembling lips with an effort that made the beaded sweat stand upon his forehead.

"Sire," he now managed to say, "it is because I remember that that I am so bold as to come with a small offering which I beg—"

He stuck at this point, while His Majesty clapped his hand against his forehead, crying: "The devil fly away with me! You have come to give? Here is a new breed of friend—since Worcester!" He took the purse which Madelin, falling again upon his knee, proffered to him. "But," he said, "you are yourself in need, Mr. Madelin, unless these clothes are a masquerade?"

"They are, sire, they are!" cried Madelin eagerly. "A legacy has come to me recently ——"

"Lucky fellow! From whom?"

"A friend, sire."

"What? Legacies from friends? Then this world has changed overnight! What friend?"

"An old companion, sire."

"His name, then?"

"Humphrey, sire," panted Madelin. "That is to say, Mr.—er—Roger Humphrey."

"Humphrey, eh? 'Mr.—er—Roger Humphrey!'" mocked King Charles. "I think I smell an honest lie here."

He stepped to the table, opened the mouth of the purse, and as he tilted it, a tide of silver and golden coins, by handfuls, spilled out, rolled and clinked on the surface, and half a dozen dropped heavily to the floor. On top of the heap lay the great ruby ring. His Majesty looked solemnly upon this money and when he spoke it was with a changed voice, and without turning to Madelin.

"Friend, what sent you here?"

"I had heard, sire, that your treasury was for the moment embarrassed ——"

"Mr. Madelin, you are a diplomat. Embarrassed is a proper word. But—ods my life!—I say, sir, what sent you here with the scrapings and the last scruples of a fortune which has already been wrecked and squandered in my service, and may God forgive me! Sir, what has sent you?"

"My father's ghost," said Louis Madelin hoarsely.

The other started, and looking not at his visitor but upward as though the face of his own slaughtered father had at that instant looked in upon his careless heart, he crossed himself covertly and turned at last upon Madelin.

"In any other name," he said with great gentleness and dignity, "I should have pressed this back into your hands. But from your poor father, Madelin, I accept

this one benefit more. Now, my good friend, give me leave to repay you in some manner. Ask what is nearest your heart."

"To kiss the hand of His Gracious Majesty," murmured Madelin.

"Ods-fish!" muttered the king to himself. "Is it possible? Is it possible? Nevertheless, we shall do something more, God willing!"

With this he drew his sword, and, advancing to Madelin, laid it upon the shoulder of the kneeling cavalier. The words he spoke rang dim and wild in the confused mind of Madelin. But he felt the sword touch his other shoulder and at last heard the far-off voice say: "Rise, Sir Louis Madelin!"

And Sir Louis Madelin rose to his feet.

"Go," said the king kindly, for he saw the emotion which was shaking the body of the new-made knight.

"Go, Sir Louis, and come to me again. Take this ring"—he picked from the table the ruby ring which Madelin himself had brought and gave it to the latter—"and you will find it a passport to our presence until I forget this day. And at that same time, may God forget me."

He extended his hand, and as Sir Louis Madelin leaned to touch it with his lips, his tears fell fast upon it. Then he fled from the chamber, weeping like a child. The king himself was hardly less moved, but striding up and down through the room he cried out to himself: "And while there are men like this, ready to starve and die for me—ay, starving and dying at this moment—I remain here playing with time like a drunken juggler with stones—time which is not my own but sacred to my country and my children who suffer for me in it ——" He broke off and called harshly: "Jacqueline!"

The door to a closet, which had been hardly visible in the dark corner of the room, opened, and a handsome

girl with vivid blue eyes and a wealth of yellow hair came out. It was plain that she had heard all that had passed and that she had been touched, for the long, dark lashes of her eyes were wet with tears.

"There is money," said her master with a brutality of voice and words which was strange in him, for with all his faults of libertinism and indolence he was rarely unkind, "There is money. Take what you will of it and go, and come back no more!"

She looked appealingly toward him, but he had sunk into a chair and with a gloomy face supported by one hand, he stared on the bright money which littered the table. Jacqueline stole to the door.

"Farewell, sire," she said.

He looked up suddenly at the sound of her voice, as though she had recalled him from the midst of a deep dream many an hour old. He saw her trembling lips, her wet eyes, and the sobs which were working in her throat.

"Ods-life!" murmured the good-natured monarch. "Shall I make two cry in one day? Bring out a bottle of wine, Jack, and a pair of glasses. These damned melancholy cavaliers make my heart ache and my throat dry."

CHAPTER III

SIX CAPTAINS

THE wind which came fluttering and by gusts through the open port troubled the flame of the candle which flickered in the lantern, so that it burned with a small, bluish light. The chirurgion, however, continued steadily with his examination. He was a sober man who never smiled and never sorrowed, but now he laid the blanket softly back upon the man of the plum-colored cloak—for it was he who lay there—and turned to the half-dozen who were clustered near by as though this matter really concerned them more than he who had been wounded.

“If the captain had lain where he was until I came to him,” he said, “he might be well enough. But he’s lost much blood. He’ll be a dead man by sunrise.”

“That’s a lie and a foul one,” answered one of the group instantly. “There’s no manner of death can come at Captain Sunday except on the open sea. You lie, Coates, damn you!”

“Quiet, friends,” said Captain Sunday. “Have you ever known old Coates to be wrong?”

The doctor gave his dying captain a look of gratitude and pride, and the others stared grimly at the prostrate form of their leader, as though they were guessing at the face and form of the invisible enemy who now leaned beside him, draining his strength.

“Bartholomew,” said Captain Sunday.

“Ay, ay, sir!”

"Will you do an errand for me?"

"To hell, and throttle the devil who stabbed you!"

"An easier journey than that. Go to the Three Lions and ask for Mistress Jacqueline Farnol. Tell her how Captain Sunday lies ——"

"By that name?" frowned Bartholomew, and looked over his shoulder as though he expected danger to rush through the narrow low door of the cabin even at the sound of the word.

"By that name," answered Captain Sunday. "She knows everything. Lead her back with you. She's my sister, Tom."

There was a stir in the little group of watchers, a stir of wonder as though it had not before occurred to them that this man could have human relations. Bartholomew departed and quiet entered in the cabin and kept every man from speech. Still, it was strange that they did not watch the color which was dying in the face of the captain but looked on one another as though new things were revealed in their eyes. They made an odd cluster, for the doctor alone was soberly dressed in drab, the others being as gay as sultans. Purple, yellow and blood-red, silks and velvets—these were their attire; but all this flaunt and flow of extravagance could not conceal the angles of their bodies made gaunt by so many years of hard living and that a few weeks of soft beds and rich food could not make them sleek. Jutting muscles and great bones showed through their finery, and their faces, every one, were browned by tropic suns, and browned again by strong sea-winds and the dashing of spray. Their hands were as black as the hands of negroes.

It was the captain who broke the silence by saying: "Well, here's my last voyage with you, mates. And when I'm singeing in hell-fire, I wonder what news will come down to me of the crew, and of you? However, I must make a will. There's an ebb tide setting fast in

me, lads, and if it takes me out to sea before my sister comes, you must know my pleasure with what is mine. Hale out my chest."

They seized it and dragged it forth. It was a ponderous trunk made of two-inch planks of cedar and bound with massive strips of wrought iron. The lock was as large as a man's hand. The sailors regarded it wistfully, as though each man had a vision of what that stout treasure chest contained.

"The chest goes to Jacqueline Farnol," said the captain. "Here's my cutlass for you, Fry."

The latter stepped forward and took from the wall where it hung the weapon designated. The sheath was plain enough, but when he drew out the blade a few inches, the candle light ran over the close-crowded and wavering lines of Damascus steel; and Charles Fry looked triumphantly upon his companions, for indeed, it was a famous sword.

"It'll give no quarter and take none while I swing it," said Fry. "But I'd rather have one of your tricks for using it than a dozen swords, Captain!"

Captain Sunday accepted this compliment and waved it aside by lifting his hand a little, for he was now very weak.

"Martin Gunn."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"There hangs my brace of Italian pistols. But they'll talk good English for you. Take them, old friend."

Martin Gunn was a little man, compared with the others, with red hair and pale, red-rimmed eyes. He took the pistols out of their sheaths and handled them lovingly, while Fry scratched his chin and eyed the guns dubiously, as though not quite sure that the better prize had fallen into the share of his shipmate.

"Jersey," went on the commander hastily, as his power waned more and more rapidly, "there's that

Spanish knife you've often wanted. May you split many a liver with it! Old Peter Solomon, a better marksman never leveled at a damned Spaniard on the Main. Take my musket. There's gold work on it that's not to your plain taste, but the steel is as true as a sword blade and you know it will shoot to a mark! Jerry Lang, I put you last; I might have put you first. You're made to my pattern, Jerry; and you're a cautious man, like me. Here's a shirt of mail that will turn a sword edge as stone turns an axe. Take it, Jerry. The others scorn armor, but I know your mind. And now here's my clothes to you, Doctor. Wear 'em and think of me, Sam Coates. As for Tom Bartholomew, he has a taste for a straight edge and a sharp point even at sea. Let him have my rapier; he can work with it."

He paused, with a sigh, and closed his eyes. More than one among them thought that the last instant had come, but there was still strength in him.

"So much for you," he said presently. "Now for me, a last wish, lads. Keep me lying here until you've put out to sea; then slip me over the side with a few shot lashed well on to my feet and give me to the sharks. But if you bury me on dry land, my ghost will do for the haunting of you all! D'ye hear?"

And raising himself a little on one elbow, his voice rang and thundered through the room in a way which all of them knew well enough, though it now thrust them back in amazement.

"Ay, ay!" came their chorus.

The captain sank back, gasping.

"There's an end of that; but curse you for ungrateful dogs if you fail me. But now the ship. What's to be done with the good ship *Careless*, God bless her! Ah, if I could have sailed her, she'd have left more than a man's name from Trinidad to la Vera Cruz. For she has the wing of an eagle and the heart of a lion, my

friends! What's to be done with her? Who's to have her?"

The group started, and the doctor, as though realizing that this matter of high political concern was beyond his province, stealthily took up the great plum-colored cloak and slipped out of the cabin to a place where he could examine his treasure in leisure.

"Let the dice say who sails her," said the deep, heavy voice of Peter Solomon.

"Damn the dice!" answered the captain petulantly. "I bought her, I fitted her with wings and with teeth, and I'll name him who's to have her. Depend on it, friends, that my ghost will be sitting on her poop when she begins to breach the waves! Come closer; let me look on you!"

They strode instantly closer, and each man fell into a posture of resolution and of high command, to present himself in the best possible light to his commander at this critical juncture. Captain Sunday viewed them beneath a frown, gathering the last of his life into his eyes. He looked piercingly at each man and, now that he was come so close to the end of his days, delivered his innermost thoughts concerning them with a frankness which would have brought a knife at his throat at any other time.

"Ben Jersey," he said, addressing that worthy who was of uncommon height, very thin, and with enormous hands and feet, "aside from a navy doctor, there's no man living has taken more lives than honest Ben. Oh, trust me to take down to hell a picture of Ben Jersey working with his knife in a press and killing as fast as a snake strikes. But a captain must know how to use the heels of his ship as well as her closefights. The *Careless* is not for you!"

Ben Jersey smiled enough to show his teeth, and stepping to the side he began to scan the faces of his mates as Captain Sunday continued his judgments.

"There's Tom Bartholomew," went on the captain, "as true a sailor as ever spat out salt water in a gale, but as long as there's liquor aboard, Tom is a madman. He'll never do to command. Martin Gunn, here, can plan an ambuscade or sack a town with any man living; but you'd never raise a crew in Port Royal, Martin. You see the insides of men as easy as others see their skins. And they hate you because you know 'em. If you were half Charles Fry and Fry were half Martin Gunn, there'd be a captain that would make Spain think old Drake had come back to earth to plague 'em; but Fry would treat a crew of seventy as if they were seventy brothers, and buccaneers need masters, eh?"

Charles Fry nodded with the utmost good nature, as though he saw the truth of this statement of his faults at once and willingly relinquished his hopes of high position.

"That leaves Peter Solomon and you, Jerry Lang," went on Captain Sunday. "How shall I pick between you? You both can sail a ship and fight her, get a crew and lead 'em; and you're known at Tortugas and Port Royal for lucky men. It's been my strength to have you with me; and your strength has been that I've kept you from murder. Ay, friends, the minute I'm gone you'll be at each other's throats. So long as Peter lives, Jerry will hunt him sooner than Spanish blood or the Dew of Heaven. And so long as Jerry lives, Peter will never sleep warm at night. Here's Peter a tiger and Jerry a lion; can one of 'em command the other?"

He shook his head, and the two big men looked ominously at each other, as though each were thinking: "Once across that hurdle, the *Careless* is mine."

"No, by God," cried Captain Sunday, his voice growing more and more hoarse and weak as he talked the longer, "the six of you make one great man, and the six of you shall command the *Careless*. D'ye hear?"

They watched him in amazement, unable to understand.

"I'll make a government out of you. The six of you are a parliament—a council; and every day one of the six shall be the captain—for that one day, friends! The next, he's one of the council and another is captain."

He sketched his plan eagerly. They were to swear allegiance to one another; the captain of the day was to have command of the ship, subject to the advice of the council unless they were actually engaged in an action, in which case the captain's word was to be absolute among them. And, so long as they held together, they would be invincible.

"For," cried Captain Sunday, "I've hunted the Main up and down and there's not another half-dozen like you."

They admitted, reluctantly, the force of his arguments; for not a man among them but had lived well under the régime of Captain Sunday and gathered in quantity the Dew of Heaven—that is to say, Spanish Gold on the Spanish Main. He made them clasp hands with him and with one another. Solomon and Lang he called last of all. And he made them swear most solemnly to live like brothers. They hung on their words, but at last they consented and pledged themselves slowly, as men who thought carefully before they spoke. And Captain Sunday, delighted with his work, lay back on his bed with a smile on his lips.

"But," said Martin Gunn, "there's six men here. If three vote one way and three another—what then, Captain Sunday?"

All heads turned at once to the little man. And they scowled bitterly upon him for he was not a man they loved.

"If there's no trouble to find," said Charles Fry, "Gunn will make it!"

"And suppose," said Martin Gunn in his quiet way, "that the voyage is 'made'; suppose that we find the Dew and take it. Who'll decide the shares? Or if Tom is drunk, who'll order him below deck? Shall the council do that, Captain Sunday? If I sit judge on a man who may be my judge to-morrow, by God, he'll find me bought without money!"

At these repeated objections, a grumble arose from the little group, as though they admitted the truth of what Martin Gunn said, but hated him for having discovered it.

"Wait," said Captain Sunday, "I begin to see—I make a sail, lads! We must find an honest man and bring him on board. We must find an honest man, friends, and make him your judge."

"I've lived forty years," said Martin Gunn, "without finding one honest man."

"Find one that's near enough," answered the captain.

"One honest man," said Ben Jersey, rubbing the top of his little bullet head with his enormous hands, "can be the hanging of a hundred privateers—if he ever finds us in England. I'd rather run afoul of a galleon with a ketch than an honest man before an English judge. And we all want England before we die, eh?"

"There's an easy way to dodge all that," answered Captain Sunday. "When the voyage is ended, and port in sight, hang this same honest man who has been your lord chief justice at the yard-arm. And so there'll be no talking."

It was the final and crowning touch for a scheme which had already appealed to them most vitally for its novelty, if for nothing else. And even Martin Gunn was silenced; they looked to him for the last dissent, found him nodding, and broke into mutters of applause. To be judged by an honest man, and then to hang the fellow for his pains at the end of the voyage was a scheme delightful beyond words to them.

“Call Billy,” gasped the captain, who was now nearly spent. “Call Billy. The dog has left us here without a drop of punch. Damn me, if I’ve lived to be merry, I’ll die drunk! A bowl of punch, and a health round. If we serve grog before a fight at sea, will you send a man to his last long bout with the devil and not a drop of rum to warm his belly?”

CHAPTER IV

AN HONEST MAN

BILLY was a young rogue of sixteen who had been whipped through half a dozen towns in England for as many rascalities. He had finally graduated from the pick-pocket ranks by taking a pistol at the ripe age of fifteen and holding up a traveler on the king's highway. When the worthy gentleman resisted, Billy shot him through the head and escaped; the hue and cry was raised after him; but he managed to stow away to the Indies, was sold there into slavery by the hard-hearted captain of the ship, made his escape from the plantation after burning its barns in revenge for a whipping, and so came to Port Royal and fell in with the buccaneers. With Captain Sunday he had proved himself keen as a fox, brave as a lion, and villainous as only the criminal brain of a man can be. When he appeared at the cabin door, however, he showed himself in the person of a remarkably tall and handsome youth whose character might be guessed at only through the baleful steadiness of a pair of very pale blue eyes. He had forestalled the order for punch, however, and disappeared for only an instant, returning with a mighty dish of it which held fully three gallons.

He served it deftly to the mariners, and then drained the dipper a time or two for his own refreshment until long-armed Ben Jersey fetched him a cuff on the ear that staggered him through the door and flattened him on the deck outside. He accepted the blow and the fall, however, with neither a yell of pain nor curses.

"But he'll cut your throat one fine night," said Martin Gunn to Jersey; and so thought they all.

Captain Sunday was too feeble to hold his cup. Lang and kind Charles Fry lifted him a little and tilted the goblet at his lips. Then they caroused all round to the glory of the good ship *Careless*.

"And for me, lads," said the dying commander, "wish me 'bon voyage'!"

They pledged him deep with a cheer, and marking the color return a little to his cheek, they even began to wish for his recovery.

"No, no," answered Captain Sunday, "I've paid my shot and I can see the breakers and hear 'em roaring for me. However, I'll live past dawn for the sake of calling Coates a liar, damn him! Another cup, my hearties!"

On the heels of that round, Jacqueline and Tom Bartholomew burst into the cabin, honest Tom pale and dim-eyed from a tremendous potion of strong waters which he had poured down his throat at the Three Lions while waiting for the lady to come down to him, and Jacqueline whiter still with grief and fear. All this changed at the sight of her brother lying propped in his bed and draining a flagon of punch, but she saw in another moment that his eyes were dim and wild and the spot of color in his cheek made its pallor more startling. She ran to him and fell on her knees beside him.

"The devil, Jack!" he muttered to her. "Are you going to take on like any landlubberly girl? Bear yourself like true blood and a lady of spirit. If you come here to dash my spirits with a fond leave-taking why, damn me, I'll wish I had never sent for you, Jack. But no—fill a glass and drink round with us. Billy, I say. Knock the head off a bottle of that Medoc and fill a glass for the lady!"

It was done, for Billy, though never in sight, was

always within hearing, so it seemed. And the glass was placed in the hand of Jacqueline.

"Drink, my girl," urged her brother.

"It would choke me, Ned," she answered. "For the dread of God, leave off this fearful carousal."

"I am so far in the debt of the devil," answered Captain Sunday, to give him the name which had become so famous on the Main, "that I am not dishonest enough to deny him now. Besides, it is a poor business to change horses in the middle of the stream, and since I have followed him so far, I shall even let him lead me to the farther shore."

"Oh Ned, dear, dear Ned," said the girl, the tears running fast down her face, "is this to be our last meeting? With these—these devils standing around who have brought you to your death?"

"Hush, Jack. By heavens, I'm ashamed to hear you say this! They had no hand in my hurt. It was given me by a damned dancing-master of a French-taught thief and swordsman, who carried a sword like a long needle, after the new fashion, and fought like one bewitched. I am half convinced that he was no man, but the devil, having let me live my time on earth, come for me in person."

"On my knees, Ned, I am begging you to think of something which must be near your heart. What messages am I to be charged with?" pleaded Jacqueline.

"To whom?"

"Our uncle, Cousin Matthew, and all of our kin."

"Our good uncle will be glad that I am gone to my account, which he knows is a long one; dear Matthew, the dog, has always feared me, and fear in a small heart becomes hatred. He will laugh when he learns I am gone. As for all the rest, I care not a fig for them. They have given me nothing but moral lessons, and by heavens, I'll repay their canting Christianity with a good pagan death!"

"Ned, Ned, you break my heart!"

"Then go ashore. No, I would not be harsh, but I'll have no black-face about me to-night. Speak of something else—of honest men—did you ever know an honest man, Jack?"

"I have met one in Antwerp," she told him, swallowing her sobs as she saw that he could not be moved from his cool determination to die like one who loved irreverence. "I have met an honest man in Antwerp."

"I'd give ten pound for a sight of his face," said Martin Gunn, "or his name."

"His name is Louis Madelin," she answered, firing a little as she thought of what she had heard and seen through the door of the closet in which she had been hidden. "He's a man of no great height—thin—his clothes are rags. He wears a black cloak and a black hat with a red feather in it. He wears one of those new small-swords that Ned has spoken of. And I tell you, that if you meet him in Antwerp, you have met an honest man."

It was a description which might have meant a great deal to Ned Farnol, alias Captain Sunday, but he had seen his conqueror of that night only in the half light of a dark passage and he recognized nothing in this description; in the fight, he had seen the face by lamp-light, but that was all he had marked.

"I think," said Martin Gunn, "that we have heard our man described for us."

And the others nodded, grinning behind their hands as Jacqueline turned back to her brother.

The object of their quest, at that time, was walking back and forth in his room with a hungry stomach and nothing to put in it, for he had so utterly emptied his pockets in the cause of his king that he had not a copper remaining to him. There remained in his possession only the clothes he needed to shelter him from the weather and two sacred things with which he would not

have parted to keep him from death itself—the one was his sword and the other was the ring; for the blade of the first had been made out of the ponderous old cut-and-thrust rapier with which his father had carved and hacked and thrust in the cause of the first Charles Stuart, and the ring had been given to him by the disinherited Majesty of England. He could not pawn these things. They were to him what the altar ornaments are to the priest. And therefore he went hungrily back and forth in his room racking his brain for schemes; but no plan developed in that agile brain because he could not focus his thoughts long enough on the vital point. Ever and anon the burning picture of what had happened in that small chamber at the Three Lions passed across his mind, and all else was blotted out for he was of that breed of loyal cavalier to whom the person of the king was as the Sepulcher in the Holy City to the crusader or the Grail to those who gave their lives for sight of it. Indeed, he felt working in himself a peculiar grace and now and again all the pangs of hunger were struck into oblivion while through body and blood passed a chilly ecstasy. Sometimes his very soul trembled; for he had heard the king's voice! Sometimes he paused in his pacing back and forth to look down on his hand, which had touched the king's! What some lean-bodied hermit and ascetic might feel, who, having renounced all earthly pleasures and mortified his flesh, believes himself safely near the precincts of heaven, this to the same degree was the emotion of Sir Louis Madelin when he recalled that his beggary was complete for the sake of the throne of his country. The very pangs of hunger became a delight!

It was a restless one, however, and it was midnight before he slept; and in a great vision saw himself lead an army to the shores of England, crush the stalwart regiments of the Roundheads and lodge the gracious

Charles once more in Whitehall. He awakened with a fast-beating heart and the transcendent glory of his dream and the bright morning sunlight burning about him. He dressed at once and, led by the pangs of hunger, with a tight-drawn belt ventured down to the streets.

"Strong men do not starve," said Louis Madelin to himself, and straightway, cocking his hat, he began to whistle a Scotch air which he had learned in Dunbar year.

He set off merrily enough, though now and then his mouth watered with yearning as he passed the fragrance of a hearty Flemish breakfast, blown to him from a kitchen window. And, wandering blindly on, he presently found himself stopped by a wall at the end of a blind alley. He turned at once and saw his retreat cut off by no less than four men of resolute bearing, armed to the teeth, who were advancing straight upon him in a significant silence.

He looked hastily about him. No houses framed the alley, which was made merely by lofty garden walls, far too high for him to reach their tops, and though they were built of rough stone, he could not climb them. He decided, therefore, to put the best possible face upon the matter and try to carry it off by a careless indifference; so he advanced whistling the same Scotch tune, and eying the four men boldly.

His heart fell as he scanned them more closely. One of them, the tallest of the quartet, was dressed in flaunting colors; the others were plain jack-tars. And all four went with the unmistakable swinging gait of seamen. They were equipped with stout cutlasses, pistols were stuffed into their belts, and something in their brown faces told him that they could use either sort of weapons in the most workmanlike fashion. "The man of the plum-velvet!" thought Madelin, and contemplated drawing his sword and attempting to break

through them at a run. But these were not people to be taken by surprise. And in sheer physical force there was not one of the four who could not have handled him as easily as he could have handled a boy. They halted, now, just before him.

"Your name, sir?" asked the tallest of the four.

"My name," said Madelin with involuntary impudence, "is for my friends and my masters. Are you in either category?"

The tall man smiled, as though he found something in this impertinence that was to his liking.

"I shall begin to think," he said, to himself as much as to his companions, "that women are able to judge men. You, sir," he added, to Madelin, "must come with us."

"By force?"

"If need be, by force."

Madelin surveyed him nervously, and his glance dwelt at last on the long rapier with which the gaily dressed giant was equipped in distinction from the cutlasses of his three mates.

"If you are here for exercise," suggested Madelin, "bid your men stand by to see fair play."

"Good!" nodded the other. "Another time, then. But at present, I am in haste. Now, my hearties!"

The last was spoken in a raised voice, and his three followers, who had been edging closer all the while, drove at Madelin with one accord. The latter had time to half draw his small-sword; then he went down in the clutch of hands which bruised his spare limbs to the bone wherever they were set. The breath was crushed from his body. Before he could regain it, a cloth was wrapped about his head which acted as a gag and a blind at the same time. He was then lifted to his feet and borne along by a strong man on either side.

CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN SUNDAY

WHAT Madelin confidently expected was that his assailants would be promptly stopped and questioned by some one of these law-loving and law-abiding Flemings who could not see a bound and helpless man carried off in this fashion; but when they were hailed with questions, the voice of the leader made answer that they were taking to the ship a deserter who was half mad with drink and insisted on screaming if his mouth were set free. Madelin struggled to break from the hands which held him when he heard the first of these parleys but he only won for himself grips which made his flesh ache. Thereafter he submitted to fate and presently heard beneath his heels the hollow frame of a dock.

The big man continued to hurry them, telling them that the captain was failing fast and that they must bring the new recruit, as he called Madelin, under the eyes of Captain Sunday to make sure that their dying commander had no objection. They were words which Madelin was not expected to understand, in the main; or else they were now so sure of him that they had no care to talk in innuendoes and by hints. Who could the dying commander be save he of the plum-colored cloak who was waiting patiently, now, and fighting away his death until he should see the face of his conqueror? And now all was given double significance through the name of Captain Sunday. There were no

newspapers in those days comparable with modern sheets which are daily fed by telegraph and wireless from all corners of the world, drinking up greedily each day's quota of disasters, of murders, of thefts, of filthy social scandals; for, after all, newspaper news is bad news. There were no such organs for the communication of unhappiness in the days of Madelin, but it was a time when travel books were devoured by thousands of curious eyes of people who wished to know the wonders of the unmapped world or of hard-handed adventurers who yearned to follow the bold footsteps of merchants or "privateers" from Ceylon to Hispaniola. And during the past five years there was not one of these records of travel and trade and piracy which was considered complete without some description of Captain Sunday. That the tall fellow of the plum-velvet cloak could be this man of fame and plunder was a shock to the credulity of Madelin, to be sure, until he recalled that it was the young Drake rather than the elder one who had stormed about the four corners of the sea and made an empire tremble. So, hurried down the streets and on to the dock by the rough-handed sailors, what he knew about Captain Sunday tumbled into his brain again for review.

He was a buccaneer who had written his name large on the Main, and it was generally considered that there was more sheer genius in him than in any other of the buccaneer leaders, though up to this time he had not been so favored by good fortune as some. Though he had failed to capture any great town, take the Manila or Lima galleon, or capture a treasure train, yet he had done well enough and was reputed to have "made" six voyages, one after the other—that is to say, he had gathered enough loot each time to satisfy his crew. It was not his piracies, however, which were the most interesting feature of Captain Sunday, but the manner in which he conducted his expeditions and the discipline

which he demanded from his men. The other buccaneer leaders were content to exercise little or no authority over their wild sailors until the actual moment of combat came; otherwise the crews cleaned neither the ship nor themselves, and let the rigging rot for lack of a little care. They sailed as they fought, desperately and led by chance. They looked on their ships as places of leisure where time was to be killed by gambling, feasting and drinking so long as provisions held out; then, dens of starvation and thirst after they had wasted in a week what should have contented them for a month. But a new leader had appeared among them who was not content to rely upon such haphazard measures and who introduced among his crew a discipline almost as rigid as that of a man-of-war. For six days every week he drilled his privateers, as they preferred to call themselves, at the guns and the muskets, with pistols and with heavy single-stick; six days a week they scoured ship, mended rigging and sails, and worked, in short, like the crew of a man-of-war; and they submitted to this régime because they discovered that time passed more quickly at sea, and that there were no fruitless voyages under this new commander. So they labored for six days, but on the seventh all rules were abandoned and there was nothing but mirth and drunkenness from one dawn to the next. And because of this singular manner of holding the Sabbath, he had acquired the name of Captain Sunday.

In the midst of these reflections, the stifling cloth was taken from Madelin's head and he found himself on the deck of that same gallant craft which he had so often watched from the window of his room while it was being fitted for the sea. He was led at once into an after cabin and on a bed at one side of it he saw that all of his presuppositions were realized, for there lay the man of the velvet cloak, his face very white, his

cheeks sunken, and deep purple shadows surrounding his eyes. Before this figure his captors stood a little abashed until the leader of the four said gently:

"Captain, we sighted the sail, overhauled him and clapped aboard him. Here he is!"

Captain Sunday slowly opened his eyes, as though he managed it only by a great effort of the will; he turned his head a little and looked into the face of Madelin. Then his eyes widened.

"This fellow—why, Tom Bartholomew, he's ——"

He checked himself and a grim smile came on his lips.

"Why not?" said Captain Sunday. "Ay, Tom, you've done well, and you couldn't have chosen a judge more after my own heart! Bring him closer. Now step back!"

They obeyed, and retired to the farther side of the cabin, leaving Madelin by the bed of the dying man. How close he was to the end, Tom Bartholomew seemed to know at a glance, for he whispered to one of the sailors to fetch in the other leaders at once. Madelin, in the meantime, was beckoned to by Farnol and leaned over him.

"You," said the pirate faintly, "are Sir Louis Madelin?"

"I am," answered the other, greatly astonished.

"Sir Louis, I wish you joy of your voyage. You and I are now about to set sail in different ships. But who can tell? We may make the same harbor!"

And this thought so amused him that he broke into laughter until blood bubbled at his lips. He sank back on the bed, panting and rolling his eyes, but he waved back the others, when they would have approached to assist him.

"The ring," he said to Madelin. "The ruby, Sir Louis! Have you pawned it?"

"No."

"Ah! Ah! Keep it, then, and wear it well. It may bring you to a strange fortune."

He began to laugh again, though it was apparent that he had fallen into a great agony. His whole body was shaking, his face was reeking with sweat, and his lips were a pale purple.

"Why, lads, why," said Captain Sunday, in hardly more than a whisper, "do we not drink to a new member of our jolly company? Wine, Billy, you donkey!"

The inimitable Billy was instantly at hand and presently placed a cup of wine in every hand, for the six leaders were now all come hastily into the cabin.

"Sir Louis Madelin," gasped the dying man, "I drink to whatever fortune you may have on the good ship *Careless*."

"Sir Louis Madelin!" echoed the six, looking wisely upon one another.

"Gentlemen," said Louis Madelin, "you do me such an honor that I can not but thank you. I am forced to drink to your very good health."

He bowed to them, but that toast was never tasted, for the leather flagon turned in the hand of Captain Sunday and the red wine poured upon the floor where the flagon dropped in turn. The captain himself had fallen back on his couch with a sigh, and when they reached him, he was already dead, looking up to the ceiling of the cabin with a smile and with patient eyes.

CHAPTER VI

LOUIS MADELIN, JUDGE

CAPTAIN SUNDAY was not half an hour on his longer journey before the good ship *Careless* was loosed from her moorings and dropped down the river with a spanking breeze and fore, top and mainsails drawing. Sir Louis Madelin was allowed to stand by the rail and watch the water combing down the sides, but two stalwart sailors stood close beside him lest he should attempt to leap overboard and swim for the shore. But he had no such plan in mind; for the first time in his life he had surrendered tamely to evil fortune and the reason he gave himself was that he was now in the hands of manifest destiny. The events which had drawn him on board the *Careless* were too complicated to be attributed to chance; besides, like most irreligious men, he was intensely superstitious. He had been informed by good-natured Charles Fry—who, now as master or navigator of the ship, walked the poop with his fine coat thrown off and his silk shirt sleeves rolled up to the elbow—of the duties which he would be expected to perform during the voyage and had learned with utter astonishment that he would be looked upon as a judge from whose voice there would be no appeal. He was, in fact, to represent the laws which Captain Sunday had enforced with so strict a hand; and a manuscript containing those laws and written in the fine, steady hand of the dead captain himself was given him. He retired to his quarters and there he perused the

sheets by the light of a dim candle which dropped thin flakes of soot over the pages.

He became aware of strange things and strange terms at once; sea laws were far, far from those of the land.

When a man's blood is hot [began the document], his judgments cut too deep; therefore no one must be tried until a day after he is accused. He shall then be treated fairly. And while testimony is taken against him, one of us shall stand at his side and help him in his arguments.

It appeared the "us" referred always to that group of stalwart leaders who were contented to serve under the leadership of Captain Sunday, though each was a man of sufficient note to have commanded a ship of his own.

He of us who acts as counsel if he succeeds in bringing off his man fairly from punishment and showing his innocence shall receive one pound from the captain; if it be a capital case, he shall have five pounds.

Here was strange but true justice, thought Madelin. And, after this preamble, he passed into the body of the paper, which set down the punishments for varying crimes. They began with sleeping on watch or over-staying shore leave for which the justice of the high seas provided that the offender should be tied with a rope under the arms and about the waist, then hoisted to the yard-arm and allowed to fall overboard where, as he struck the water, a gun was discharged—a grim shock to the ears of a man under water. This was repeated quickly from one to three times according to the heinousness of the crime. For theft there was flogging on the bared back, or ducking from the bowsprit, or towing astern on a rope. For second offense of sleeping

on watch they might be fastened to a mast and weights tied about their arms and neck and left until their backs were nearly broken. For the third offense the unlucky fellow was tied on the end of the pitching bowsprit in heavy weather and left there an indeterminate time until he had nearly perished. For drawing a weapon in a quarrel, there was no limit of punishment even up to cutting off the guilty hand. For complaints about food or cookery a man received the bilboes; for repeated offenses of any kind the judge might inflict the punishment of keelhauling.

The perusal of this list left Sir Louis Madelin smiling, but when he went up on deck again and surveyed the crew his smile disappeared. It seemed to him that the world had been plundered of its choicest villains and that they had been assembled all in one ship's company. On the whole they were very young—he could not put their average age at more than twenty-five or six—but every man carried a weight of heavy experience. They had lion voices and eyes like foxes. They were of all heights, but one and all they were muscled like Hercules. They went about with bare legs below the knees, bare arms below the elbows, and naked feet with toes which, from much work in the rigging, had become almost prehensile, like the feet of monster apes. It would be unpleasant work to discipline such fellows as these, and almost immediately, as the ship swerved into the Western Schelde with the wind freshening almost to a gale and the *Careless* frolicking over the waves, there was a call upon his office. For the boatswain, a one-eyed fellow named Matthew Hicks, famous for his prodigious strength, came aft tugging Springer, a sailor, after him. Lean Ben Jersey was that day's captain; he bade the boatswain wait where he was and pipe all hands aft; then he summoned Madelin and presented him to the crew with a little speech in which he bade them look well to this new

officer on the *Careless*, for he was to be their judge of discipline and of every dispute or complaint.

"Appointed," continued Ben Jersey, "by Captain Sunday himself, as an honest man!"

The crew gave Madelin a cheer of rather dubious volume; then they bent attentive ears to the trial and the judgment, all saving those who were necessarily told off to work the ship. It was the first time they had taken her to sea and it was also the first time that any man among them had handled a boat of her rig. They had been in doubt about that single huge mast and the clumsy mainsail, but now, as they watched the *Careless* fly down the Schelde, winging toward the open sea, they looked to one another and grinned with pleasure. Matt Hicks was now giving his testimony which was to the effect that Springer was a prodigious liar. There was no saving Springer, who had stated that he once saw a man drink six quarts of punch and remain so sober that he afterward was able to climb up to the fore topmast and work there furling the topsail. Even the smooth tongue of Martin Gunn, who was appointed his counsel by Madelin, could not help him, and Madelin, recalling word for word the appropriate sentence in Captain Sunday's code of laws, ordered Springer to be drummed around the ship with the boatswain piping and another seaman crying: "A liar! A liar!" after which poor Springer was to be set to work in the most odious office of ship's swabber and continue in that post until another liar was found and convicted. The sentence was listened to anxiously and then greeted with a round cheer when it was seen that the new judge was intent on carrying out the traditions of the dead captain. Springer was duly drummed and piped around the ship through a chorus of taunts and laughter, and straightway began his duties.

The body of Captain Sunday was not buried until they stood well out to the open Main and that strange

ceremony made a never-forgotten picture in the mind of Madelin. They brought out the dead captain dressed in his finest clothes. The council of six had ransomed the velvet cloak from Sam Coates and with his hat on his head, tied fast, the plum-colored cloak fluttering in the wind, three or four round shot lashed to his feet, pistols thrust into his belt, with a fine cutlass at his side, his shoes newly cleaned and polished so that they glistened in the sun, Peter Solomon and Jeremiah Lang, who were the most eminent members of the inner council and the most trusted lieutenants of the dead commander, carried him with bared heads to the rail of the poop where he had planned to walk on this same voyage. Charles Fry, who had a turn of eloquence, was given a tumbler of raw spirits to stimulate his wits and was placed in authority. He first ordered the ship brought to and himself, as the best navigator aboard, gave the proper orders until the *Careless* was lying to and swinging lightly with the run of the sea. He next directed that the crew load the guns, which was done, and leaving a man at each with a burning match he had an ample round of rum served to the others. These things were performed in a solemn silence and with bared heads, the crew then standing about with their mugs of drink in their hands. And now the master of ceremonies made a brief speech.

“When a man like Captain Sunday,” he said, “strikes sails and comes to anchor in a port he’ll never leave and which the rest of us will make when our times come, it’s right that we should clear decks and stand by to see what manner of man he was. If you can tell a ship’s home port by the cut of her jib, you can tell a man by the cut of his face and the way he weathers a storm; and when I saw Captain Sunday I knew I’d found my master. I’ve sailed with him three years. I’ve never seen him leave a mate in a pinch or cheat even a boy out of his share of plunder or show his heels to any

vessel within ten guns of his own. So I say this drink of mine goes to the sharks along with Captain Sunday; lower away, friends!"

Accordingly, he tossed his rum over the side and the body of Captain Sunday was allowed to slip into the sea. The rum of every man in the crew splashed the blue water at the same time that the flaunting hat of Captain Sunday disappeared beneath the waves, and the twelve guns of the *Careless*, beginning at the larboard bow, were fired one by one. After this, sail was made at once and the *Careless* stood on her course; but all was in a silence very odd for those noisy decks, and it seemed to Madelin that even three days later the faces of the crew were unwontedly serious and there were fewer oaths as they worked the ropes.

There was no serious call upon his office until the afternoon of the tenth day when Hugh Daniels and Peter Shaw, coming off watch, fell into an argument over the ownership of a yellow shirt, which ended in Daniels stabbing his mate to the heart after a fight in which Joe Naseby, a friend of Daniels, had drawn a knife in his aid. There was no doubt about the facts; Daniels himself confessed to them sullenly, adding that he was sorry the thing was done and that it had been an explosion of temper on his part; that Peter Shaw was an old shipmate and a boyhood friend of his in Bristol; and that he would give an arm to have Peter back on deck as well as ever. But Louis Madelin was never a man of mercy, and now he had the letter of Captain Sunday's law enforced. Dead Peter Shaw was stood up by the rail and some shot lashed to his feet. Hugh Daniels was then lashed to him, back to back. He began to show a little emotion, now, and begged Tom Bartholomew, who was his particular patron among the officers, to say a word for him, at least to give him a man's death by shooting rather than throwing him overboard like a dog. This request Tom Bartholomew

strongly backed, concluding it with a narrative of a day on the shore of Campeachy Bay among the logwood cutters when he had been lost in the woods and nearly perished by thirst until Daniels adventured out for him in the night and found him and saved his life, a thing which none of the other logwood cutters would venture upon. But Madelin was adamant, and the living and the dead were thrown overboard together with Daniels cursing his judge till the blue waters closed about his mouth. A strange freak followed, for though Shaw's body was weighted with shot, a queer action of the waves buoyed them close to the surface, with Daniels uppermost. Leaning at the rail, the whole crew could see his face in the water, the eyes open and looking up at them, and the features kept calm by the iron will of the murderer. At this there was a great outbreak among the men and a general demand that Daniels be saved, but at that moment the weight of the shot overcame the upward current in the water, and dead and living went down together like a plummet.

There were black looks for Louis Madelin after this and Tom Bartholomew came up to him in a rage.

"If the rest were of my mind," he told Madelin, "they'd lash you to the masthead and let the gulls feed on you—a damned, bloodless landlubber to give orders on a privateer!"

"Another word from you," said Madelin, "and I'll have you up for mutiny. Six men have given me my authority, not one!"

And Bartholomew went aft, cursing.

There was still Joe Naseby to punish for the heinous offense of drawing a weapon in a quarrel. Madelin ordered him to be keelhauled; and this was done within thirty minutes from the drowning of poor Daniels. A rope was rigged from the bowsprit, passed under the length of the *Careless*, and then Joe Naseby was dragged along it by another rope handed in from the poop. Made-

lin, who in fact had no idea what the term keelhaul meant, fully expected that the sailor would be drowned, particularly when the rope stuck once or twice and had to be jerked violently by the half dozen hands who manned it. On those occasions, Tom Bartholomew, who had taken a great dislike to the judge, turned to him with a sour word and look. But Madelin, though he was moved to the heart, disdained to show the slightest emotion.

"This will get you a knife between the ribs," Bartholomew told him.

And Madelin answered with that faint sneering smile of his which never failed to put men into a passion. Joe Naseby was drawn up to the deck, at last, senseless from his long dip under water, with his shirt torn off his back and his flesh gouged deep in many places by the barnacles and other rough projections which thrust out from the hull of the ship. When a swallow of brandy was poured down his throat, however, he recovered enough to lift his head. The first face his eyes lighted upon was that of Sir Louis Madelin; and that worthy knight felt the point of the knife already at his heart.

He was now hated, as he could see, by every man aboard the *Careless*. The crew looked upon him as a devil of cold-blooded cruelty; and their six masters never favored him with a word. He lived by himself with his narrow-bladed rapier and a pair of pistols for companions, and by the black brows of the six when they passed him, he could guess that only the command of Captain Sunday kept him from being tossed overboard. In the meantime they had made great distance west and south. The sun grew hotter; the air softer; and the crew went about half-naked. There was a growing excitement apparent in them, also, and their eyes were fastened steadily on the West. He could have known by these signs alone that the *Careless* was approaching that great hunting ground, the Spanish Main.

Then the norther struck them. For two days a heavy bank of clouds had been visible in the northwest each morning and evening, extending some ten degrees above the horizon and with a perfectly smooth top, like a wall. On the afternoon of the second day, the wind became fitful, jumping to various points of the compass; and at four bells that night the storm reached them.

It came out of a brightly burnished night sky, with not a cloud visible and when it overtook them, it seemed to Louis Madelin that an immense hand had struck the *Careless* along her starboard side. She canted to a dizzy angle and when he scrambled on deck the wind was yelling over the good ship like a pack of demons and the topmast lay trailing over the side. It had been carried away by that first tremendous clap of wind. The sea was running such mountains high that each great comber blotted out half the stars in heaven as it approached, threatened to burst across the decks, then tucked a shoulder under the keel and heaved the *Careless* at the zenith. Down she would go, swift as an arrow, into the next trough and pitch up once more.

Madelin could only lie flat on the deck, clinging to a capstan, but the barefooted crew worked like madmen to bring things to rights, sweeping into the rigging, or hauling on the ropes with cheers that reached him sometimes loud as a thunderclap in a pause of the wind, sometimes thin and small as the buzzing of a bee. But now the *Careless* righted a little, paid off before the wind, and presently began to drive southeast, burrowing through the waves like a thrown spear, and sending huge seas washing down the deck, fore and aft.

The worst danger was over, but it seemed to Madelin tremendous enough, for the huge waves were rolling up behind like raised hands, and if one of them broke on deck, the *Careless* would go down like a ship of lead. Or, now and again, a wave caught hold of the stern, shook the vessel as a parent shakes a child, and then

cast it away, sidelong, to crash into the trough. The *Careless* groaned in every joint and timber; it did not seem that anything made by human hands could last five minutes through such battering; but for three days she lived through that unabated hurricane.

It was a wet life aboard her, however, and Madelin, now making his first long voyage at sea, wondered that men could ever follow such a dog's life out of preference to any other. She was adrip or awash from end to end. The gun ports were closed; the hatches were fastened down; not a breath of good air got below and the muss and dirt multiplied marvelously. No man could stay overlong on deck, washed cold by the waves, and tugged at by the buffeting winds; but when he went below his only comfort was stifling air, darkness precariously broken here and there by a candle which burned small and blue in the filthy atmosphere, and a dripping blanket which he might wring out with the help of a mate before he lay down to pray for sleep and shiver and groan instead. The galley fire could not be lighted; for food there was only cold, raw pork—the beef supply was short for this voyage; and the salt pork was flanked and cheered by mouthfuls of moldy biscuit. But worst of all, in the mind of Madelin, were the pests of crawling vermin, the beetles, the rats, the cockroaches which swarmed below deck, though the *Careless* was a new ship; and with the vermin went the indescribable and sickening odor of the bilge water as it was stirred and pitched about by the motion of the ship, penetrating every crevice below deck with its foul breath.

But on the fourth morning the storm dropped away; the wind swung to the southeast; the sun shone out of a clear sky, and life became once more possible. In a trice, the moldy clothes were washed out and the rigging filled with them, drying sweet in the warm breeze; the rotting decks were scraped clean, and then scrubbed down with sand and vinegar to freshen them,

and all the ship below and all the cabins were filled with smoke of burning pitch, of vinegar fumes, of brimstone, until the woodwork was purified and the stifling taint of the storm forgotten.

And forgotten it was, even by the oversensitive soul of Sir Louis Madelin; and when the ship swept gaily northwest by north, with the top-mast repaired and in place and every stitch of canvas working, he swore to himself as the *Careless* swung across the waves that there was no heaven like a life at sea! It was mid-afternoon, the fourth day after the storm began, when they sighted the galleon.

CHAPTER VII

THE GALLEON

THEY came suddenly upon it, for a thick cloud had obscured the horizon until the last quarter of the day, and as it thinned they saw a great three-master with all sails set, a dim blue picture through the mist. Madelin heard not a shout; yet the magic of the news needed no voice, it seemed, for presently every man in the crew had tumbled up on deck and was leaning at the rail or clambering into the rigging for a better view. But for every glance they gave her, they gave two to the form of the captain of the day, big Jeremiah Lang standing on the poop with his legs braced to the pitch of the ship and the wind parting his square yellow beard. His arms were folded on his breast; his eyes were calm; and Madelin thought he had never seen a man in whom he would have reposed more confidence. When the captain spoke, the deep voice was audible from one end of the *Careless* to the other.

“Make sail!” he said.

A shout rose from the crew as wild and ringing as the yell of the pack when it sees the fox at last, after long, hot trailing; and in a trice the *Careless*, sailing large, was headed straight for the distant giant. Even then Sir Louis Madelin did not understand; he had ridden in many a hot encounter by land but to run into the teeth of such odds as yonder monster with a mere wasp of a ship like the *Careless*, seemed too much like madness. He turned to Billy at his side, for the boy

had become like his shadow, trailing him back and forth in every spare minute, seldom speaking, but observing Madelin as a rare and new type of manhood.

"Are we to engage that ship?" he asked.

"Ay," said Billy, "if we can catch her."

To a soldier, it was beyond comprehension, but now there came into his mind fragments of wild stories he had heard and read of the doings of these buccaneers on the Main; of a dozen wild men routing a hundred; of Grenville like a lion in the little *Revenge* engaging a whole Spanish fleet in a day's battle. Such things had seemed to him miracles but here were sober facts of the crew of the *Careless* making ready to attack yonder wooden fortress. There was no doubt about their ability to overhaul the other, for the *Careless* was now flying through the waves and the sails of the galleon were turning from blue to white; now they gleamed like silver under the sunshine. Still the *Careless* gathered on her, until the big ship, which seemed willing enough to run for it, saw that there was nothing for it but to engage and at once out flew the flag of Spain and a dozen colorful pennants. In went the sprit-sail of the Spaniard, now, and, shortening sail all round, he slung his mainyard, and with only his foresail and his fore and main topsails, stood on his course prepared for trouble.

"He's stripped and waiting for us," said Billy gleefully. "But we'll give him his bellyful before we leave him!"

In the meantime, the buccaneers were working furiously to prepare for the combat. Pennants and streamers floated from the mast head, the bowsprit, the end of the gaff; the bulkheads, and in general all the woodwork from which flying shot were apt to knock off splinters that in sea-fights were more deadly than the round shot themselves, were covered with canvas or hammocks; the guns were cast loose and loaded and half a dozen tubs of water set about with blankets a-soak in

them to extinguish any sudden blaze which might spring up; for sponging the guns there were more tubs of vinegar water; the magazine was hung about with wet blankets; shot was brought upon deck and powder in little barrels with wide leather flaps to cover them; to give the bare feet of the privateers a better grip upon the pitching deck, sand was sprinkled everywhere; the sails were swashed over with alum solution; and here was the cook who, having extinguished his galley fire, was busily serving a mouthful of food to the men as they stood to their posts. Last of all, the closefights were rigged—that is to say, a stout strip of cloth was strung around the ship on top of the woodwork to keep the crew from sight of the enemy and also to embarrass boarders. The Spaniard had taken the same precaution, his own closefights being of red stuff trimmed with white which gave the last touch to the gala appearance of the galleon.

Now the matches were burning, the guns primed, the wind toward her foe; while the heart of Sir Louis Madelin died in him every moment that brought them closer and made the enemy more monstrous. Five of the size of the *Careless* would not have made her bulk and to match the dozen guns of the latter the galleon showed fifteen round ports on either broadside, besides those in her poop; and the lightest of her guns was heavier than the greatest bit of ordnance on the buccaneer. Moreover, from the suddenness with which she had shortened sail and completed her preparations for the fight, it was apparent that she was swarming with men; while on the *Careless* there were scant threescore and ten besides the council. Of the commanders he had already seen enough to know that they were all desperate and wary fighters; of the crew he could now form an opinion easily enough for they loitered at their posts in a sort of hungry impatience. To the last instant they were busy looking again to the primings of

their pistols and long-barreled muskets, or grinding a keener edge upon their cutlasses. These were not the only weapons. Some of them were affectionately handling short-handled axes with hooked spikes in the head whose use Madelin was to discover presently; others disdained both point and edge, but gripped stout clubs with knotty heads. And in the face of every man there could be plainly read that he sailed the Main not for the Dew of Heaven but for just such jeweled moments of peril as this!

Madelin, watching them and wondering, felt like a feeble boy among men. But if each of these was a hero, what were their leaders? They went cheerfully about the deck, speaking familiarly to the men, lingering here and there to crack a joke or call up some mutual memory. Only the captain of the day remained aloof upon the poop, still with his arms folded and the wind in his yellow beard, watching the two ships close.

The Spaniard did not waste time hailing. Instead, he threw a shot which was intended to fall across the bows of the *Careless*, but instead, it skipped across the waves and dropped short. Then the guns from his stern opened altogether and apparently they were heavier or better-aimed ordnance, for every shot went whistling through the air above the *Careless*. This singing and shadowy flight passed on; a great round hole had been punched in the center of the mainsail. Otherwise there was no sign of their passage, and the crew looked up at the hole in the canvas and cheered.

They were eager at their guns, but Captain Lang had not given the word. He had not changed his posture, except when the poop guns of the Spaniard were fired, he had dashed the hat from his head, and now his long, yellow hair was blowing. He seemed like a lion to Madelin and his heart, which had grown small indeed, was suddenly warm to think that Merrie England had mothered such a breed of men as this!

They were drawing in range of the starboard broadside of the galleon now, and as fast as they came up the guns were fired. They were still at "long bowls" and the only damage done was that a strip of the close-fights was knocked down. Every shot had whistled close however, and the crew began to look dark.

"Poor marksmen, eh?" said Madelin to Billy, who had been the busiest man on board for ten minutes but now stood beside him again stripped to the waist, with a cutlass at his side and leaning upon an immense musket.

"Not like English gunners," said Billy tersely, "but damned sharp for Spain."

And he fingered the lock of his gun, while Madelin noticed that his hands were as steady as though he were making ready to shoot at a target.

And Billy's opinion of the marksmen in the Spaniard was now shrewdly substantiated, for as a ripple of fire began at the bow of the galleon and passed aft until her reloaded broadside had been discharged again, the *Careless* shuddered from stem to stern under the shock of the shells. Of the fifteen bullets, one, improperly loaded and charged, struck in the midst of the narrowing strip of water which divided the two ships; eight cut through the rigging above the deck; no less than five struck solidly through the hull; and one, flying across the deck, gouged up a great splinter and hurled it javelin-wise at a sailor named Menken. He was an old Devon man whose grandfather had sailed twice under the great Drake; and now he was just turning from the gun which he commanded to cheer his mates when the splinter struck him just above the left hip, drove through his body until it juttet out a palm's breadth behind his back and hurled him heavily against the gunwale. He died almost at once and spent the last of his breath in prayer to his mate that he take Hugh's cutlass and fight with it that day. "For I want 'em to feel a dead man's teeth!" gasped Menken, and died.

His fall had raised a wolfish howl from the buccaneers and now the command came almost at once from aft and was passed down to the gun-deck, where Madelin was then standing, to open fire. It brought a deep cheer from the throats of those warriors; for long impatient minutes the master gunners had been sighting their pieces, and now they opened with the bow gun leading, followed by every piece on the larboard broadside. Not a shot missed the big target before them and the shout of rage and consternation from the galleon rolled thick and indistinct to the ears of Madelin, as though some great bull, the king of the range, had been gored by a weakling calf.

The Spaniard now swore and came about on the opposite tack, the nimble *Careless* doubling instantly and giving the enemy her starboard guns as she straightened out, while Madelin could hear the huge voice of Jeremiah Lang thundering above: "Keep her luff! Keep her luff!"

So the *Careless* clung to the wind; but though she could outsail her foe almost two to one, and though her gunners planted well-nigh every shot, it was plain that the battle was against her. The Spaniard was firing too fast for accuracy, but even so, with her great superiority of guns and the weight of her shot, she was cutting the little *Careless* to pieces. Madelin waited on the gun-deck until a round shot entered a port-hole, struck the muzzle of a cannon, hurled it from its carriage, and sent it tumbling across the deck, where it smashed the life from one poor fellow who stood between it and the gunwale. Then, sick at the sight, though he had seen blood before, Madelin went above.

Matters were even worse here. From her towering decks and her lofty main and fore-tops, crowded with musketeers, the Spaniard maintained a steady fire of small arms that searched and combed every inch of the decks of the *Careless*. One poor man lay on his face in

a pool of blood in the middle of the waist; and against a bulwark sat Ben Jersey, with his shirt torn off, busily winding a bandage around his body. Fast as he worked the blood gained on him, and dyed the cloth red. Yet when Madelin came near and offered help, Ben Jersey gave him only a side look and a snarl. He was badly hurt, perhaps mortally; he was saving even the energy of speech until he could wreak himself on the men of Spain.

But in spite of the havoc, there was Jeremiah Lang still calm upon the poop, and walking back and forth to shout orders for the steering and the fighting of the ship with a voice that rang to every corner of the *Careless*.

Matters grew each moment more desperate, however, and now calamity indeed overtook them, for a chance shot striking the weakened topmast full in the center, it toppled suddenly and fell upon the gaff and mainsail, making it impossible to work the latter, while the fore-stay and the fore-sail went down in the ruin as a matter of course. The *Careless* was now all but unmanageable and the Spaniard, with cheers of triumph, began to make sail to stand away from a foe which he could now finish from a distance and at leisure.

All had come out exactly as Madelin had expected and he felt Spanish irons already weighing him down, but Jerry Lang had still one card to play. If he could not best the big ship at a distance, he could still try her hand to hand. He himself ran to the helm and swinging her hard to starboard, he watched a lucky gust of wind catch the mainsail and veer the gallant little ship straight at her enemy. It was the very maneuver for which the galleon had sheered away; but crippled though she was, the wind favored the *Careless* and as her nose touched the bigger ship, she was instantly made fast.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIGHT

TO MADELIN it seemed like tying the *Careless* to make sure of her ruin when he looked up to the towering wall of the galleon, but while the boatswain's whistle screamed, the buccaneers were swarming up through the hatch. Half-naked, brown-bodied men rushed past him, sweating, cursing, their hair blown on end, bare cutlasses flashing blue and white in their hands, or clubs or axes as the case might be. They had gone berserker; they were not men, but beasts.

And Louis Madelin, having made certain that all was lost, dismissed care from his mind and like a stoic sat down on a splintered barrel to watch the play, knowing that in the end it meant death or slavery far more hideous than death for himself and all the brave men of the *Careless*. He loaded his pipe, lighted it, and puffed with much deliberation and enjoyment as he looked on.

The sun had been westering fast since the fight began, and now it hung in a broad, distorted crimson oval like a round face with the cheeks blown out just above the horizon and painted the western slopes of the waves with smooth crimson, tinting with rose the powder smoke gathering about the ships. Through that smoke the buccaneers rushed, some shouting, some even singing, and there was Billy, the cool and cunning Billy, dancing a half-nude dance on the deck, brandishing his cutlass, then rushing to join the attack with blood pouring down

his face from a musket bullet which had nipped the side of his head.

They made a ladder, these madmen, by driving the spiked heads of the axes into the wall of the galleon; then, holding their swords in their teeth, they went up the side hand over hand and were presently swarming along the closefights of the Spaniard.

They were met by a living wall of steel. Pikes, cutlasses, rapiers, gun-butts, beat and stabbed and cut them down. They shrank from that edge of destruction; they swept back again; they cut through the closefights; they advanced on the deck of galleon and the steel wall staggered and shrank back.

"Very good, very brave," said Louis Madelin, removing his pipe to blow out a long whiff of tobacco smoke, "but all useless. Ah!"

For the men of Spain, though they had given way before the raging of these mastiffs, pushed back at them again and crowded them once more over the edge of the ship. Some fell dead, covered with wounds, on the deck of the *Careless*, far below the enormous poop of the galleon. The others, dripping blood, descended slowly from the battle, like a red stain creeping down the smooth side of a bucket.

And the victors came after them. Foremost in resisting the boarders had appeared one who wore a steel morion on his head and whose body was guarded with a cuirass which gleamed yellow with the rich chasing of gold. Even the morion was set off with a flaunting feather; the sleeves of his doublet were slashed with bright colors; he was the paragon of gay warriors. He was armed with a long cut-and-thrust rapier, a heavy weapon which he managed with as much ease as though the ponderous steel had been dry wood, and wherever he appeared, men fell, and the buccaneers gave way.

Now he led the counter-attack. By his direction—and Louis Madelin saw him clearly as he stood on the

edge of the poop, a great tall man with a narrow black beard—rope ladders were cast over the side and he himself was the first of those who clambered down. It was daring and dangerous work, that descent, for the buccaneers on the deck below were deadly marksmen and at such short range they could not miss. One after another the Spaniards toppled from the ladders, until those above hesitated and refused to venture down to destruction.

All of this was marked by the man in armor. Twice he had paused in his own descent to cheer on his companions, and twice bullets had glanced from his perfectly tempered cuirass; now he turned his face to the *Careless* and plunged from the ladder. There was a shout of triumph from the privateers, and above them a shrill yell of woe and terror wailed from the men of Spain.

“The keystone of their arch has fallen,” said Louis Madelin, as he tamped his pipe, “and perhaps Captain Lang has a chance now!”

But the noble Spaniard was not dead from a bullet or stunned by his fall. He had leaped with a purpose and aimed his fall at a stalwart pirate just below. He struck his knees against that fellow’s shoulders and they both rolled together on the deck. But the leader from the galleon was instantly on his feet; his long rapier flashed about him like the weapons of three men at work. He thrust one through the shoulder. He beat down with the hilt of his sword one who rushed in upon him. He closed another through the skull. And for a fraction of a second the buccaneers gave back before this dealer of death.

Even that small interval was enough to bring him succor, for having marked him rise and fight, his followers were thick on the ladders coming to his support. They jumped and tumbled and scrambled on to the deck of the *Careless*, and the privateers bulged back from

before them into a semicircle which constantly widened and deepened as fresh recruits poured down from the galleon. More ladders were lowered; the stream of reinforcements was thickening momentarily.

It was not easy work. For with the certainty of defeat before them, the men of England fought as heartily as though victory lay in the next stroke, and for every one of them who went down, three Spaniards fell. Here were the leaders raging like giants above the crowd. The huge voice and the wide shoulders of Jerry Lang loomed here; and yonder was Peter Solomon, not less terrible; here was Charles Fry swinging a huge two-handed axe and bringing down his man with almost every blow; here was Tom Bartholomew, half drunk, laughing, singing and with the strength of two men in his sword arm; here was little Martin Gunn, saying never a word but grinning as he worked in human flesh with point or edge of his cutlass; here was tall Ben Jersey, also. He no longer carried a single wound. He was a red man, covered with blood which was constantly freshened from a dozen sources, and in the frenzy of swift-approaching death he leaped up and down in an ecstasy, then tore a club from the hand of a seaman and rushed in upon the Spanish leader. Two of the foremost he struck down to clear his path. Then, as he came at the man in armor, a long ray of light darted at him and the point of the rapier passed through his throat. He was dead before he touched the deck.

It was a sad reverse for those bulldogs of England. They had seen lean Ben Jersey rage in many a fight and never yet go down, and half their heart left them as they saw him fall. They still fought strongly, manfully, but a little magic of confidence which had made their steel bite home before was gone now, and their ring began to widen swiftly; it stretched to a thin line, and once that line was broken the battle was over. Where it waxed thinnest was just before that indomitable war-

rior in armor whose ringing cry of "Santiago! Santiago!" broke now and again above the clamor always echoed by a gasping shout from his men; and Charles Fry, aware of that approaching danger, swung out from his place and closed with his enemy. He aimed a tremendous blow at the head of the warrior. It slid harmlessly down the rapier's blade. He struck again; he stabbed and slashed like a madman; but the rapier was a dancing wall of steel and his strokes slipped away from it like drops of rain. And the point found him, in the meantime. It pricked him through the left shoulder and that arm hung crimson and dangling at his side. It slashed him across the forehead and he was blinded with the flow of blood. He staggered in for a last blow—and the swordsman clove him through the neck!

A groan rose from the English at that second death among their best and chosen captains, and Louis Madelin, listening, found that he had risen to his feet to watch, and now he remembered that he had been knighted by an English king, and that these were fellow Englishmen.

Upon the heel of his shoe he tapped out the glowing cinder from his pipe and put it fuming into his pocket. He drew the small-sword from its sheath and tried its supple length between his hands; upon his head he settled his hat and brushed out the length of the red plume which curled along its brim, then he tossed his cloak behind his shoulders and advanced.

If he had not sought danger, in fact, danger would have sought him, for at the spot where staunch Charles Fry had fallen the English ring was snapped at last and the Spaniards, breaking through and turning right and left, were taking the crew of the *Careless* upon the flanks of the line. It was the man in armor whom Madelin had singled out for himself. That indomitable warrior was now engaged against a staggering buccaneer who was already exhausted by his wounds but whose

sword-craft still lived in his right wrist. He would not down, but still put the leaping rapier's point away from him and struck back with force enough to have cloven oak planks.

"Reynolds! Reynolds!" cried Madelin, who chanced to know the fellow's name. "Give back from him; he is my man!"

And he went through the press straight to the Spanish captain. Two men were in his way. One lunged with a half-pike. He stooped beneath the clumsy thrust and knocked the fellow senseless with the hilt. The second was a white-shouldered giant from Castile, strong as a Goth and cunning as a Moor; but now, seeing the thin ray of steel in the hand of the Englishman, he trusted to a downright blow with his saber. Behold, that slender weapon took the full force of the cut and put it like a feather aside. Then Madelin ran him through the hollow of the throat and while the men of Spain gave back a little before this deft-handed destroyer, he wiped his sword with a handkerchief and stepped to the side of Reynolds. That gallant fellow, beaten to one knee and with a great raw gash across the top of his head, too weak and stunned to rise or even lift his sword, waited for the coup-de-grâce which now towered above him, but when it fell, it slithered futilely down the delicate rapier of the knight who now saluted the Spanish hero with the formality of the dueling field and instantly engaged him.

At the first thrust that gallant gentleman smiled, at the second he frowned, at the third he set his teeth and began to fight for his life. For the first time since he set foot on the deck of the *Careless* his forward progress was stopped and the English were marvelously heartened. Besides, it seemed to them as they watched the light weapon of their judge at work, foiling every move of the strong swordsman from the galleon, that a miracle was being performed beneath their eyes. They rallied

after the sudden and indescribable fashion of all fighting crowds.

"Santiago is matched!" they called to one another. "Our luck is in! Now, mates, together! Heave ho, together!"

Arms numb with weariness grew light. Despair is the greater half of exhaustion. Now their voices rose, their red blades flickered in the sunset light, and they pressed home like a cavalry charge. Those of Spain gave back, then stiffened their front ranks and fought back furiously. Two came on either side of their hard-pressed captain and drove at Madelin together, who only avoided death by his speed of foot.

"Back, dogs!" cried the Spaniard. "Back, back! This gentleman is for me alone."

They shrank away, amazed, and the man in armor pressed furiously against Sir Louis Madelin. Well was it then for that wily fighter that the tricks of a dozen lands were in his finger-tips. For thirty long seconds they stood to each other; then the narrow sword went home and the broad one dropped with a shiver of steel against the deck—he of the armor had been run through the right arm.

"Yield!" cried Madelin, stepping back with his red sword poised.

"Santiago!" cried the Spaniard, and rushed in.

The very spot where he should kill his man was in the eyes of Sir Louis Madelin—a little triangle of naked breast where the cuirass curved down at the base of the throat—but his hand strangely failed him at the last moment and he had not the heart to thrust. Then the weight of the big man struck him, and they crashed upon the deck.

It would have been short shrift for Sir Louis Madelin then had not one arm of his foe been useless, but as it was, he was able to writhe from under and presently

he was above his enemy, with one knee ground into the left arm of the Spaniard which held a dagger.

"It is over, señor," said Madelin, with his sword raised and the needle point ready. "You surrender yourself to me?"

"*Madre de Dios! Madre de Dios!*" groaned the miserable Spaniard. "I am forever ruined. I am a lost and disgraced one. Kill me, then, and have done with it!"

"Señor," said Madelin kindly, breathing hard from the work, "I came upon you fresh when you were weary with the battle. I beg you to be generous. For how can I strike? The unlucky wound has made you helpless."

"They call for me!" muttered the fallen commander, as a great roar of dismay and sorrow rose from the ranks of his comrades. "They call for me and I can not answer, but this is the will of heaven. Brave Englishman, I am your prisoner."

Madelin instantly helped him to his feet, and cutting away his sleeve, forgot the battle while he bandaged the wound of his captive.

"For," he said to himself, "I have fallen on a treasure. When the Spanish rascals have murdered the buccaneers and mastered the vessel, as by their numbers they can not fail to do, I shall be protected by this same gentleman who had rather die than surrender. When the time comes, they shall find it easy enough to persuade me!"

And he sat down by the side of his friendly enemy.

CHAPTER IX

THE CAPTURE

"I HAVE not yet the happiness," said Madelin, assuming all the formality of Spanish courtesy for the nonce, "I have not yet the happiness, sir, of knowing the name of the brave gentleman whom weariness and the fortune of war has introduced to me."

"The name which I have disgraced," said the Spaniard, turning white in an anguish of shame, "is Francisco de la Vega."

"I am Sir Louis Madelin," answered the conqueror.

"Sir Louis," said Don Francisco hastily, "I beg you to believe that having surrendered myself"—swallowing hard as he spoke the shameful word—"I shall not attempt to escape. You are free to join the battle once more."

"Señor de la Vega," answered Madelin smoothly, "there is no pleasure in this battle equal to that of your conversation. In the meantime your sword, which by an unlucky chance, fell ——"

He had carried the long rapier away from the trampling line of battle when he retired from the struggle with his prisoner, and now he bowed as he presented it with the hilt toward Don Francisco. The latter, biting his lip till the blood started as he received this testimony of his defeat, returned the blade to its sheath and muttered his thanks.

"And yet," he added with a touching frankness, laying his hand upon the arm of Madelin, "if anything

can bring grace to a shamed man, it is to have fallen at the hands of a gentleman."

He broke off violently, crying: "Low-hearted rascals! Dogs unworthy to be called Spaniards. Turn again! St. George and all the saints of war be with them—they have turned to women! Oh, God, that I must sit here and look on!"

For with the capture of Señor Don Francisco de la Vega, the whole complexion of the fight changed. The feat of Madelin with that light and dexterous sword of his which had seemed little less than a miracle to the buccaneers, in the eyes of the Spaniards was a complete one. They were seized with amazement and the rush of the English crowded them back, while the flood of their own reinforcements now packed the space in which they stood. They had no room to free their weapons and make play and they began to fall like sheep before the butcher. All in a moment the hopes of victory which had been almost in their grip were gone; some one raised the fatal cry: "*Todo es perdos! Todo es perdos!*" and they turned to flee. Flight was not easy, however, for the narrow ladders were blocked by those who had started to descend and who for a time remained clinging on the rungs, uncertain what to do. The deck of the *Careless* became a shambles. Solomon and Martin Gunn, Jeremiah Lang and Bartholomew were killing at every stroke and the buccaneers rallied hotly behind them. Wounded English who had crept apart from the battle and sunk down in exhaustion and despair, now rose again to strike in the victory. Some of the Spaniards strove to clamber up the ladders over those who were already struggling toward the high top of the poop above them; others, to escape the swords, axes and clubs which plied around them, threw themselves over the side and perished miserably by drowning between the two vessels. Still more threw down their arms and begged for quarter which was given simply

because the English had not time to stay and kill. They left behind them a crowd of disarmed Spaniards on the deck of the *Careless*, guarded by a few half-helpless wounded of the English while those of the buccaneers who were able to bear their own weight, swarmed up the ladders at the heels of the Spaniards.

These carried their panic among their compatriots on the galleon who had not yet been engaged hand to hand. There was hardly a stand on the edge of the poop, but the crew of the galleon swayed back and the men from the *Careless* poured in. While ever that soul-chilling cry of: "All is lost! All is lost!" rang and wailed above the battle.

Señor Don Francisco, in the meantime, was in a paroxysm of shame and grief as he saw the course the battle was taking and from time to time he cried out sharply as though the wounds his comrades received were falling upon his own flesh. When the buccaneers reached the poop above, his hopes rallied for the moment and he shouted involuntarily: "Santiago! Turn now and strike them down! Santiago! Santiago!" But his hope died almost at once.

"They have seen the devil," he groaned, "and their hearts are dead within them. Alas, Sir Louis Madelin, the battle is ended and this is a butchery in which my son Hernando will be foully murdered while God himself knows what shame may befall my sweet lady!"

"Speak to me, señor," said Madelin, for even his selfish and hard heart had been touched by this last speech. "Your son and your wife are on that ship?"

"My son, and the lady I intend to make my wife."

"Her name, Don Francisco?"

"It is Mary Winton."

"She is English?"

"Yes."

"An English lady in those hands—all the fiends forbid!"

“Señor Madelin, by all the valor which I know to be in you, and by all that is generous in a brave heart, I beg you to leave me and rescue them from the horror which is about to befall them, if it lies in your power. Swear to me, señor, as you desire mercy when evil shall befall you—swear to me to use all your endeavors to restore them to me.”

“I give you my hand and my promise,” said the English knight.

“Go, go, and God be with you. Tell the bloodhounds that if they wish gold, Francisco de la Vega will pay for his lady and his boy enough treasure to crack their backs with the weight of it!”

Madelin hardly stayed to hear this; he was already surveying the lofty side of the galleon, and now he ran toward the dangling ladders, up which the last of the buccaneers had already made their way. By the time he reached the top he found that the battle was already over and that there were surprisingly few dead in sight. The majority of the men of Spain, having surrendered, had been hastily disarmed and crowded down into the waist of the galleon, presided over by a few English wounded, as on the *Careless*, but with the additional advantage of having two or three small deck cannon loaded to the muzzles with small scraps of iron and musket balls and trained upon the prisoners, ready to blow them to pieces if they so much as stirred. The majority of the privateers had by this time dispersed through the ship to hunt for pillage but some twenty were busily assailing the last point on the galleon at which resistance was shown.

It was on the highest cabin of the poop that the handful of Spaniards remaining kept up a determined fight. They had supplied that cabin with ample store of muskets, powder and ball, and they kept up a steady fire at every enemy who showed himself. The English, led by Solomon and big Jeremiah Lang, stuck to their

work, but they had already lost two men killed and half a dozen badly hurt in this engagement; the dozen who remained for the attack were calling furiously for reinforcements, cries which were quite unheeded by their companions, who were busily searching for loot; in the meantime, maddened by this long resistance after the galleon was to all intents and purposes already in their hands, they were vowing death for every occupant of that stubborn cabin. They put up a hearty cheer when Sir Louis appeared; their hatred of their judge was quite forgotten now, and half mockingly, half expectantly, they asked of him another miracle. He went straight to Captain Lang and tall Peter Solomon where they stood with their best men about them.

When he asked them what was to be done, they answered with a voice that they would stay to their work till they forced the cabin and cut every throat they found in it.

"Then," said Madelin, who made no doubt that the lady and the son of poor Don Francisco were kept in that place, "all is ruined. The prisoners begin to stir and talk together in the waist. The guards you have placed to watch them are falling down, sick with their wounds. Another moment and they will make a rush for freedom. Who will stop them when they start? Your crew is scattered throughout the ship. You have in hand only this scattering of men here. Caught between two fires, what will happen then, Captain Lang?"

He had painted the matter far blacker than it was. Those prisoners in the waist were men beaten in body and spirit and they had no more heart remaining, but the buccaneers were thrown into consternation by the news. They agreed in a trice that the cabin must be taken at once and at any price.

"Have you offered quarter?" asked Madelin.

"The stubborn dogs laugh us to scorn," said Peter

Solomon hotly. "They mock us and defy us. The fools have lost all sense."

"They are the gentry and the officers of the ship," said Madelin. "They are men who would rather die than be disgraced. Yet they are manageable, no doubt. Offer them quarter, Captain!"

Captain Lang took him at his word, and calling out in his voice of thunder, he offered their lives to the defenders if they would surrender at once. The answer was a shout of derision and a general discharge of muskets.

"Your heart is right," said Sir Louis Madelin, at once. "I have fought with these fellows before in Italy and I know their way. With your permission let me speak to them."

He received that permission readily enough; so he drew out his thin sword again, tied a white handkerchief on its point, and raising this above his head, advanced boldly within pointblank view of the guns in the cabin. He was challenged at once and ordered to halt. Behind him were the unseen mastiffs of England; before him were the unseen Spaniards. It was just such a stage as Madelin most preferred to perform upon.

"Gallant gentlemen of Spain," he said, "you struggle in a lost cause. What remains for you to defend?"

"Honor, Englishman!" answered a clear voice.

"You have done enough for that, thrice over," he assured them. "But the patience of Captain Lang is at an end; he is rigging a deck gun to turn against you."

"It will be welcome," answered the spokesman.

"Do you speak," asked Madelin, "for yourselves and the son and the lady of Señor Don Francisco de la Vega?"

There was a brief pause after this, and finally the other asked in what name he came. He replied that he came from Captain Lang. "And in the name," said Madelin, "of all men who admire courage in an enemy."

"What security have we if we surrender?" asked the leader.

"The honor of a knight of England, the word of Captain Lang and his men."

"It is sufficient," said the other instantly, and straightway threw open the cabin door.

What Madelin found within the cabin was a scene of horror and courage that moved even him. Three men lay dead on the floor and only three were living, together with a lad of twelve who was still busily engaged loading a musket, which had apparently been his work during that heroic defense. In a corner crouched a girl of twenty or a little more, her face swollen with weeping and pale with terror, her hair disordered and straggling.

"To every man," said Madelin to himself, "his own taste in women. Poor Don Francisco!"

He turned to the boy who had now sprung up and dropped the musket clapping his hand to a dagger in his girdle and quite prepared, by the flash of his eyes, to fight on to the last. He was a true child of Señor de la Vega, dark-skinned, with black hair and bright black eyes. A more handsome or gallant youngster, Madelin had never seen.

"Don Garcilasso," said the boy, "have we surrendered?"

"We have, child," said the captain of the luckless galleon, "God has spoken against us."

"To whom," said the youngster, "do I render myself?"

"To Louis Madelin," answered that swordsman, "a knight of England."

"Sir Louis Madelin," answered little Don Hernando, "it is the first time that two men of my name have surrendered in one day."

"Don Hernando," said Madelin gravely, "it is the fortune of war. I have myself been taken by an overpowering enemy and on my honor I felt it no disgrace."

"Did you not, truly? Now God be praised! And my dear father," he cried, suddenly clinging to Madelin. "I saw him fall before you—and all the world turned black—"

"He is well. He is only slightly hurt and he has sent me for you."

"Had you come on him in the beginning," quoth Don Hernando, "before he was weary from his work, it would have been a different story."

He clapped a hand upon his mouth.

"Señor, señor!" he cried, "I have said an ungracious thing. I beg you to forgive it."

"It is forgotten," said Madelin, as seriously as ever, "but the lady is weeping, Don Hernando."

Don Hernando went instantly to her and took her hands from her wet face gently.

"Rise, señorita," he urged.

"Are we all to be murdered?" quavered a sobbing voice.

"We are in the hands of a kind gentleman. Be brave. See, we are all safe. My father will take care of you, and so shall I. Be brave, señorita. Lean on my arm. Fear not. All shall be well."

And so he led her from the cabin, with his head high as an Arab colt. Sir Louis Madelin followed thoughtfully in the rear.

"A creature of milk and water," he said disdainfully to himself. "That a man among men like Don Francisco should have settled his heart upon such a weak-headed young fool!"

CHAPTER X

JUSTICE FOR MARY WINTON

Now that the battle was over, it was time to count losses and gains, and the losses were heavy enough. The little *Careless* had been half riddled with the heavy shot of the Spaniard and the carpenter was now busily at work in the brief tropic twilight and then into the night by the light of lanterns, plugging the holes with sheets of lead and with oakum, while a quiet sea and still winds favored the work. As for the galleon, whose name was the *Madre de Dios*, she had been well pounded, but her stout timbers had resisted the small shot and to all intents and purposes she was as seaworthy when the battle ended as when it began. The human losses on either side had been immense. Of the men of the *Careless* there were scant forty living, and ten of these were helpless with wounds, while only two of the remainder had escaped without some hurt more or less serious. The slaughter among the Spaniards had been appalling, for out of the three hundred and fifty sailors and soldiers upon her, no fewer than one hundred and twenty-eight had either been drowned or else killed outright, most by the sword. A hundred others were more or less seriously wounded. The gaps in the ranks of the crew of the *Careless* were partly filled by the enrollment of twenty-five English prisoners found below decks on the *Madre de Dios*. They had manned a stout English merchantman which, seven days before, had been overtaken and captured by the Spaniard after a resistance

so stout that the ship sank immediately after the engagement. And these, who had taken no part in the recent fight, were the hottest of all against the men of Spain. Not one of them had sailed as a privateer before, but without an exception they joyously enlisted on the *Careless*. The taking of the *Madre de Dios*, they swore, was not a tithe of the repayment they would exact from Spain for the sinking of their ship.

The loot of the *Madre de Dios* was large, but not of the sort to warm the hearts of the seekers for the Dew of Heaven. She was bound from Spain for Cartagena and therefore she was laden with stuffs which would be most useful to the colonists. There was an immense quantity of iron work; there were tons of powder and more tons of sheet lead; there were stacks upon stacks of muskets, pikes and swords; there was ordnance of heavy and small size, from little rabinets of three hundred pounds up to one great cannon royal of four tons; there were canvas, cloth, and a huge stock of bright trinkets and toys which were always useful in the trade with the Indians. Besides all of these, there were rich clothes to fit out the wardrobe of wealthy officials and mine plantation owners. But, as Peter Solomon expressed it, though there was enough on board the gal-
leon to stock a town and to fit out a fleet, there was little enough to line the pockets of privateers; in actual cash or readily convertible stuff, aside from a meager picking of jewels, they found no more than five thousand pieces of eight in the captain's cabin.

It was decided to take the prize to Port Royal and there sell her, though they would be lucky if they secured a fifth of her value at that port. As for cash, the crew were gladdened by a rumor which presently was circulated, for it was said that Señor Don Francisco de la Vega had offered no less than fifty thousand pieces as a ransom for himself, Mary Winton, and his son; offering to leave Don Hernando as his surety while

he traveled with the lady of his heart to his estates in Peru and there raised the coin, which would be paid to them on demand, in exchange for the person of his son. There was only one obstacle, and this was that Mary Winton was eagerly demanding her freedom and begging that she be not delivered into the hands of a man she did not love. But it was presumed that this objection would have small weight with the commanders. In this supposition, however, they were not altogether right, for a dispute rose which equally divided the four leaders and finally they sent for Louis Madelin to judge the matter.

The council was held in a cabin on the *Madre de Dios*, and the judge clambered up the rope ladder singing softly to himself. Behind him labored Billy who had been the messenger who brought him the summons, and when they reached the poop they stood together looking for a moment over the scene. The night was soft and thick as blackest velvet so that the outlines of the ships were lost here and there in spite of the lanterns which were burning. But, looking up, they could see the lofty spars of the *Madre de Dios* swinging slowly back and forth among the dim multitudes of the stars, while the waves that swayed her lapped at the bows or curled along the side with soft rushings. These smaller sounds were only heard at intervals in the wild revels, for the *Madre de Dios* was laden, among other things, with many tuns and pipes of heavy Spanish wines and these had been liberally broached for the use of both victors and vanquished. English voices roared, pistols were fired and even ordnance discharged to celebrate the rounds, as they were drunk; sometimes all was partly hushed while some lad, famous for his mellow voice, sang a plaintive ballad; and again from the between-decks of the *Madre de Dios* where the prisoners were sparsely guarded and liberally supplied with drink, there arose a half wild, half solemn Spanish song

which showed that the conquered had forgotten their defeat.

Madelin watched and listened for some moments, puffing contentedly at his pipe the while, as though the summons of the captains was a small burden to him.

"But you, Billy," he said to the youngster beside him, "you walk as straight as though you had not tasted wine to-night!"

"Neither have I," said Billy.

"The devil! And why not?"

"Why, sir," said Billy, "I was wishing just now that I could ask you the same thing."

Madelin turned sharply upon him. Young as he was, the lad was fully as tall as Sir Louis and already broader. He promised, on a day, to be as magnificent in stature as big Jeremiah Lang himself. Now the star-light set his eyes glimmering a little, and a pang of cold entered the blood of the knight as it had done more than once before when he faced this sinister youth.

"I hear that you have five wounds, Billy," he said suddenly and kindly. "You should be in your hammock."

"Five scratches," said Billy.

"You want something of me, lad?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Speak out round and hearty, then, as Captain Lang would say. What is it?"

"Five minutes of your time, sir, to teach me how to hold a rapier like your own."

"So? So? Listen to me, Billy, no man under thirty has a right to stop drinking and begin thinking. I have this advice for you. Go ashore after this voyage and apprentice yourself to a trade; otherwise they'll stretch your neck at a gallows before your time."

And he walked on through the dark toward the lighted window of the cabin leaving Billy standing behind him. He turned when he reached the door and

looked back. Against the distant stars he could see Billy's head and shoulders framed. He had not stirred from the spot.

There were six men in the cabin: Jerry Lang, Martin Gunn, Peter Solomon, Tom Bartholomew, Don Francisco, and de la Vega's own servant, a young half-breed whom he had carried with him from Peru to Spain and whom he was now taking back. The nimble fellow knew the wines and where they were to be found; he was now serving the drinks in the cabin. A goblet was instantly put before Madelin, but when he had tasted it, he let it stand and listened to the others.

The case was strong on either side. On the one hand, Señor de la Vega had successively raised his offers to sixty thousand and then to seventy thousand pieces of eight, but even this princely sum could not shake Tom Bartholomew and Jeremiah Lang, who staunchly vowed that if an English girl did not wish to marry a Spaniard, they would be damned before they would deliver her into his hands; while Peter Solomon was just as determined on the other side and Martin Gunn declared that he had seen half the countries of the world and women in every one, but he had never yet clapped eyes on one that was worth a hundred pieces, to say nothing of twenty or thirty thousand! At this point they stuck, and demanded an opinion from Sir Louis Madelin.

The latter felt the entreating glance of the Spaniard upon him; and he remembered the blubbered face of the girl as he had seen her in the cabin. To be sure all reason set toward the side of Don Francisco, since he had set his heart on having her, yet the manly attitude of Lang and Bartholomew moved him in spite of himself. He frowned at the floor in deep thought and then Lang asked the Spaniard pointblank the very question which Madelin was too polite to voice.

"If you love the girl, Mr. de la Vega," roared the

captain of the day, "how the devil can you marry her out of hand, this way, when she wants none of you!"

At this, Don Francisco turned gray with fury, but his answer was smoother than oil upon water. It was true that she protested, she did not wish to marry him, but he pointed out that she just as freely expressed her esteem of him as a man of honor and that she seemed to be as happy to have him for a friend as she would be unhappy to have him for a husband. He brought to their minds that she had seen him as a man of war first, capturing the ship in which she was sailing from England to Virginia, slaughtering the crew of the ship in the battle; that she had passed into a strange vessel and heard a strange language spoken around her; that she had been forced to witness the results of another stern fight at sea within the week; and that naturally such events put her out of tune for sentimental proposals. But for his part, he desired not to force her into a marriage, but only to have time and peace in which to let her grow acquainted with him. If he could freely travel to her new home in Virginia, he would willingly do so and abandon all thoughts of taking her with him to Peru, but since he could not go to her own home, he only wished to have an opportunity of presenting his proposals to her in peace, when her mind should have forgotten these recent and terrible scenes. If she were still obdurate, he pledged his word as a gentleman to conduct her to Cartagena and return her to Virginia on a ship at his own expense.

"There are other reasons which influence me, gentlemen," he concluded with much dignity. "There are such things as a man rarely speaks except in the presence of one woman in the world, and I leave it to your kind generosity to imagine what is in my mind concerning the lady."

There was no mistaking the sincerity with which he spoke, and, when he had done, he turned to Madelin

with the others and waited for the deciding voice. The latter had now made up his mind.

"It seems to me, my friends," said the knight, "that it is not unfair to balance the great passion of Señor de la Vega against the reluctance of the lady. If you were damning her to the level of a slave, I should vote with Mr. Lang and Mr. Bartholomew. But you are making her the mistress of a great house, of a train of servants, of huge wealth which can afford to pay a ransom of twenty thousand pounds in cash. And I say, gentlemen, that after due consideration I feel the money makes the difference. In the winning of the lady you have all played a part, but the crew has played an even greater part still, and I have no doubt where their votes would lie. I stand with Mr. Gunn and Mr. Solomon in the matter. The lady should go with Don Francisco!"

The Spaniard drew a great breath; Bartholomew cursed in frank disgust; but Jeremiah Lang said not a word, only holding the eyes of Madelin through a long moment with a penetrating glance.

"Very well," he said at length. "But send your fellow for her, Mr. Vega,"—jerking his thumb at the half-breed—"I'll have her know who sent her to Peru. I want none of the misery of an English girl on my head. One thing more, Mr. Vega. What about her religion? Will you make her a Catholic?"

Don Francisco became very grave.

"A judgment has already been given, I believe."

But Madelin felt a touch of regret like a prick of a spur.

A deep silence settled over the cabin after the half-breed left it, with Lang and Bartholomew staring gloomily into their cups and the others shifting nervously in their chairs with the exception of the judge, he being one of those rare fellows who can put remorse in the pocket and forget it.

The door opened at last. The soft, tropic breeze wafted in a breath of sea-air and a distant singing and then—oh, heart of Louis Madelin—the girl stood before them.

CHAPTER XI

DON FRANCISCO DEPARTS

THAT sight of her, so changed from what he had first seen in her, swept him back to a fairy tale out of his childhood wherein the kitchen wench is touched with a wand and grows at once into a princess, beautiful beyond belief; and surely, he thought, nothing saving a white magic could explain the transformation! Her very clothes were the very same, and yet different; the cloak was just the one she had worn before, but the hood which had covered her head then was now fallen back and the hair brought to tidiness. Sir Louis Madelin could have gazed upon it for a long time, and upon nothing else, for sometimes beneath the shadows a light gleamed in it, like bright copper under the ocean, washed by the darkness of the waves and brief glimpses of the sun. Once when she turned her head, he swore to himself that her hair was a coiling wealth of gold, gently burnished; and he felt a vast desire to spread that hair down her back—how low it would reach!—and then let the light of a dozen lanterns burn and flow and shimmer and sparkle in the threads.

All sign of weeping was gone from her now, but though she carried her head high it was plain that she came to them in mortal terror. She was smiling on them, poor child, not because she felt kindness or confidence toward them, but because often in the past by that smile she had disarmed opposition and made a welcome for herself even among strangers; it was a

power which had shone on old men and young men and made them alike gentle, and so she smiled now, very timidly, and with her great blue eyes full of the darkness of terror. She came slowly in, with one hand gathering her mantle at her breast and with the other resting on the shoulder of Don Hernando to whom she pressed close as though the boy had power to save her and protect her. At least he would have freely ventured his life in her service, and that was plain by the dauntless fashion in which he turned his head and slowly surveyed each face among those around the cabin.

"Here they've made up their minds, Mary Winton," said Jeremiah Lang, rising from his chair and glowering sternly about him. "They're going to—sell you to the Spaniard!"

Señor de la Vega started to his feet with a cry, but Lang raised his hand and Don Francisco sank down again, biting his lip and gripping at his sword.

"You go with Vega," said the English sailor. "But by the Eternal God, if blood would keep you clean of him, here's one Englishman would spend some of his best to save you from Peru! It's their work, Gunn and Solomon, and the man they call the judge—a rare judge, say I!—Sir Louis Madelin. He gives you to the Spaniard!"

And growling deep in his throat, he stamped out of the cabin and hurled the door to behind him with a report like the explosion of a pistol.

"I'll go after him and have him tell me word by word what he means by that manner of talk!" snarled Peter Solomon.

The long fingers of Louis Madelin caught his arm.

"Not yet," he said, "for to-day he is captain."

"True! True!" muttered Solomon, nodding, and he resumed his chair. As a matter of fact, he was only eager to flee from the cabin so that he might have to endure the eyes of the girl no longer. Even Martin

Gunn, whose impudence was famed to have taught the very arch-demon a lesson, grew a trifle uncomfortable and was observed to frown darkly to cover his shame and confusion so that in the trying moment only Louis Madelin himself retained an undaunted brow before the girl.

Don Hernando was explaining eagerly to her: "Now I praise God for this deliverance, dear Lady Mary! You will go home with us now to Peru. My father shall be your father; I shall be your brother, and there will be such happiness that you and I ——"

"Hush, Hernando!" whispered the girl, staring about her as though these were not human faces she looked upon but the masks of devils. "You can not know all that is meant for me."

"Dear lady," said Don Francisco gently, rising and holding forth his hand to seat her, "where there is time, I shall explain why ——"

"Hernando! Hernando!" breathed Mary Winton, "take me from this place!"

"But," said the boy, bewildered, "this is my dear father, and you are to come with us to be happy."

"Alas," said the girl, as she saw even this weak ally taken from her, "I am lost."

Then, as desperation grew stronger than her fear, she made a step toward her enemies and threw out her hands to Louis Madelin because in his calmness he seemed the keystone which supported their cruelty.

"How can I be alone," she cried to Madelin, "when there are Englishmen so near to help an Englishwoman? Oh, sir, if you have a mother or a sister or a wife, for their sakes be kind to me."

It is said that the only virtue of the devil is pride, and Sir Louis Madelin was now supported by it, for if the girl's voice penetrated to his very heart, he felt the piercing eye of Señor de la Vega fixed upon him, and he was too proud to change his decision. Indeed,

he was so far hardened by that pride that while his heart ached he was able to shrug his shoulder and sip his wine carelessly before he answered.

"A decision has been reached, madame," said he. "And we can not change it. Hernando, lead the lady back to her cabin."

She went out blindly, with her hand on the shoulder of the boy and he comforting her with murmurs, but when she was gone honest Tom Bartholomew, who had been sweating with agony all this while, struck his hand upon the table so heavily that the whole cabin trembled.

"This will bring us bad luck," he told them gloomily. "I'd rather have burned a town of women and children than sold this girl. If we have luck on this voyage, write me down a fool and a false prophet!"

Sir Louis Madelin remained after the others had left one by one; and he finished his wine while he listened to the professions of affection and esteem from Don Francisco, yet in his heart he was saying darkly: "If I had not held my hand; if I had stabbed this damned Spaniard through the throat, none of this would have come about!"

They sailed on the next morning with the strong and steady trade wind lifting them bravely along toward Port Royal. There had been work on the *Careless* all the night and now she was refitted with a topmast, new rigging had been rove to take the place of that which had been torn to pieces in the fight, and with her magazine of powder and shot heavily stocked from the cargo of the *Madre de Dios*, with two new guns brought aboard from the galleon to give the little ship much-needed heavier metal, she went on as ready for a new engagement as ever. The galleon lumbered behind her until they were within easy reach of Port Royal; then the long boat of the galleon was hoisted overboard—and a fine seaworthy craft it was—and manned from among the Spanish prisoners. In command of that ship went

Señor Don Francisco de la Vega. He aimed at Cartagena, and thence overland a long journey to Peru, where when he reached the town of Nueva Alcantara, he would at once raise the ransom in cash and hold it in readiness, to be given to the buccaneers when they brought his son to him. The parting between him and Don Hernando was a parting between two stoics. They embraced with dry eyes, gave each other a smiling word, and so the father was gone and the son remained standing at the rail and looking after the departing boat with a fixed smile, though the tears were crowding in his eyes, as Sir Louis Madelin observed. He had been commended to the boy as a special guardian; he had given to Don Francisco his word that he would exercise a particular vigilance over Hernando, and now he felt himself in the position of a foster father for a few weeks. But this and all the rest was dim in the mind of Madelin and one thing occupied all his thought—the glance of horror and of scorn which he had received from Mary Winton when he went to bid her farewell that morning. But she had borne herself with singular dignity at the last. There were no complaints, no weeping, no imploring for help and mercy. She was full of surprises to Madelin and this calmness and courage was the most amazing thing of all to him, for he had stood by in the hope to see her weaken and appear contemptible; for after that he was sure that he could easily forget. But when she appeared so calm and white; when she gave her hand to Tom Bartholomew and Jerry Lang to thank them for the effort they had made to save her; and when at last, sitting in the long boat, the wind tipped the hood from her head and showed her hair like bright copper against the blue ocean, Sir Louis Madelin felt a sense of doom close round him for he knew that he loved her with all his heart and that he could never forget her to his death-day.

In the meantime, all the guns of the *Careless*, and all the guns of the galleon roared a salute to the departing boat, and the long boat answered with a salvo of small-arms, muskets and pistols. After that, the sweeps and the squaresail bore her rapidly in one direction, while the two ships beat away for Port Royal and soon a squall of rain drew a curtain which shut the long boat away and they saw it no more.

They reached Port Royal the next evening and Martin Gunn came to Madelin with the strange message that he was to consider himself a prisoner while they were in port—that he would be kept in the forecastle with iron on his ankles and Billy to watch over him. When Madelin expressed his surprise and indignation, Martin Gunn did not waste time to beat about the bush. He told the judge frankly that though the authorities were willing enough to close their eyes to privateers and their prizes which were brought into the harbor of Port Royal, yet if an Englishman saw fit to testify against them it might be the means of putting every man into a halter.

“Which leaves this small question in my mind,” said Madelin in the end, “if you have this opinion of me, what will be done with me when the voyage ends?”

“Why,” said Martin Gunn, “by that time perhaps you will be converted into a regular privateer!”

But he did not meet the eye of Madelin, and the latter spent a night of no sleep and much thought.

CHAPTER XII

OFF TO NARUJA

THEY spent a fortnight in Port Royal, during which time the galleon *Madre de Dios* was disposed of to a rich Virginia merchant while her cargo was sold to some advantage in the town itself and the shares of the booty divided among the crew. Their pockets were emptied, however, almost as fast as they were filled, for the wine shops in the town offered tempting opportunities to the crew. Madelin saw them by glimpses now and again when one or two of the sailors would look in on him in the forecastle, always drunk, and always dressed with clownish gaiety. Some of them even put on powdered wigs, which looked foolish enough above their brown faces, and whatever their eyes fastened on in the town they bought at the owner's price. They carried fragments of gossip, as well, and much talk about great preparations being made in Cuba to retake Jamaica from the English, and about an armament which was fitting in the harbor of Havana. Never a one of them appeared without some gift for Sir Louis, so that it was plain they valued him. They brought him fruit, a pistol with a richly chased butt, and a dozen trinkets, and whenever they came they expressed their heartfelt desire that he should be one of them.

On the fourth day, Jeremiah Lang and Tom Bartholomew came to him in person and waved Billy away from the forecastle while they talked to their prisoner.

"Sir Louis," said Jerry Lang, "some of the course

you've laid since you come aboard has been to leewards of the way that Tom and me would have steered; but the hand that beat Don Francisco is a hand we need, and the head behind the hand. Sir Louis, if you'll be one of us and pledge us your hand to be a true ship-mate, you go free this minute; more than that, you're a valued man aboard the *Careless*, and if you join us freely, you'll step into the berth that Ben Jersey or poor Fry stepped out of. Tell us your mind on it."

The long-stemmed pipe which was the constant companion of Madelin was often of rare use to him, and now he blew forth a great brown-blue cloud of smoke through which he studied the faces of the pair. They were the most hostile to him of the commanders and a proposal from them had additional weight. And yet, as he studied them, strange things went on in the mind of Louis Madelin. If he had done rascally things in his life, he wrote them down easily to necessity, and now his gorge rose until he turned pale with his anger.

"My friends," said he when the smoke had thinned away, "are you Englishmen?"

They looked at each other in surprise and then nodded.

"Then," said Madelin, "you have put hands on a man who was knighted by the sword of an English king. You have taken me by force among you and now you honor me by proposing that I join a set of thieves. May God help me until I have quit myself on you all. That is my answer!"

They left him in a rage, hastily for fear lest they should be overtempted to set their hands on a chained and helpless man, and Madelin cursed his imprudence after they were gone. For the words had tumbled out of his throat in a passion which he regretted the instant he had spoken. It was still pride, pride, the folly and the virtue of the devil, which pulled him down.

The next day he spoke to Billy.

“When the voyage is ended,” he said, “what will your shipmates do with me, Billy?”

The boy looked at him with his cold eyes and shrugged his shoulders.

“Suppose,” said Madelin, “that I were to teach you something about the management of this little sword of mine—”

A greed which was keener than the greed for gold appeared in the pale eyes of Billy. He asked for a lesson before he spoke, and Madelin willingly enough let him take the thin rapier, let him examine the quadrangular blade of it, and then taught him how to stand, how to bear his weight upon his feet, how to carry his left arm poised behind him. He taught him the parries, the attacks and the thrust; he taught, above all, how the fullest lunge must not carry the fencer off balance but leave him poised and ready to recoil like a stretched spring. All of these things Billy drank in, working with a silent intentness and obeying instructions with great humility. He did amazingly well, for he had worked with a cutlass until his wrist was iron, and his body was nothing but sinews, quick nerves and stringy muscle. Of course he had only turned the first page of a long book, but when the lesson ended and Billy dropped panting to the floor, Madelin was able to promise him that one day he would be a mighty fencer.

“As for these armor-slashing, cut-and-thrust rapiers,” said Madelin, “they are dying; in ten years you’ll see them pass. Speed, speed is the thing, Billy! A light foot and a long lunge! And now, tell me what you know of their plans for me.”

In return, Billy tilted back his head and then drew his forefinger slowly across his throat.

He could say no more. What all their reasons might be for this bloody resolution he did not know, but he had overheard them in the cabin when they came to the resolution that when their voyage ended, they must

not leave their lives in the hands of their "honest" judge. That same evening Madelin made a proposal to Billy that the latter liberate him and that they fly together.

"You're to make your way in the world by the sword," said Madelin, "and I can teach you so that in three months you can handle the greatest of these swashbucklers like children. Turn your back on the *Careless* and come with me."

But Billy, looking him steadily in the face with his pale eyes, said not a word, and Madelin understood at last why such a youngster had been appointed his guard. Even Billy, however, could not remain awake all day and all night. When it was dark, three nights later, Madelin waited until he heard the soft and regular breathing of the boy and knew he slept. Then he took from his pocket a bit of flat steel spring which he had taken from a trinket that one of the sailors had brought to him the day before. Working slowly, after the manner of a certain rogue who had served in his company at Worcester and taught him the trick in return for five pounds, he worked at the wards of the lock until they turned. He slipped out of the fetters, taking the greatest care lest a sound should disturb his guard, stepped over the prostrate body of Billy and crept up to the open deck.

Now he had his first glimpse of Port Royal. It was a black huddle of shadows crowding out on a low, sandy point, and here and there lights showed through doors which were left open to the warmth of the night. For it was a still, hot evening. The low bodies of three or four periaguas lay on the beach, splotches of black on sand which there was just enough starlight to silver faintly; and there were the hulls of two small and three large ships in the harbor, with lanterns burning on either side of their poops. Madelin observed all these things deliberately, enjoying his freedom as it came to

him, bit by bit. There was need for haste, since Billy might waken at any moment and set up an alarm, but out of old experience Madelin had learned that haste is foolish. He even paused to observe how pleasantly the wind stirred in the cordage of the *Careless*, and how the lights made yellow spots and streams on the oily black surface of the ocean. Then he took off his shoes and his jacket, to be prepared to swim if there were need, and stole after along the deck like a cat.

Once or twice he halted, listening, and there was much to hear. In a cabin on the poop he distinguished the voices of Martin Gunn and Peter Solomon, who had become inseparable confederates since the selling of Mary Winton. From the town he clearly heard the noise of the usual nightly revel, and when single voices shouted now and then he could almost distinguish the words. A boat was being rowed out into the harbor, for though he could not see it or quite locate the sounds, he heard clearly the turning of the oarlocks and their groaning.

He continued on his way aft.

There was one man standing watch with his back to the ship, and leaning upon the wheel. Madelin leaped on him from behind, caught his windpipe in the crook of his arm and brought him down without a sound. He gagged the watchman with the jacket which he had taken off, tied his hands and feet, promised him a knife in the center of his back if he stirred, and then looked aft. All that he hoped was there—a little skiff swinging at the end of a rope, with the starlight glittering on the wet blades of the oars which were cross in her. He had only to slide down the rope to her and then strike out for the shore; five minutes would bring him to safety.

He had a foot on the rail when he was struck from behind and fell forward on his face with his brain in darkness.

When he recovered his senses, he lay once more in the forecastle with his head aching, a great lump behind his ears and a fever in his blood. It was Billy who had turned the trick, waking, finding his prisoner gone, and instantly stealing after him with a marlinspike in his hand. Now he sat beside the reclaimed fugitive cross-legged with his head canted back and a far look in his eyes. Looking up to him, half dreamily, Madelin put his finger at last on the strangeness of the boy. He had the features of a Norseman, but he had the mysterious soul of an Oriental. He was composed of negations. He was not brave—he simply felt no fear; he was not cruel, but pity had been removed from his soul. Into what manner of monster he would grow up, Madelin could hardly conceive. When he asked Billy what had happened, Billy told him frankly, everything—how he thought that the club had crushed through the skull, and how he had despaired when he felt that his fencing lessons had come to an end.

“Why did you do it, Billy?” asked Madelin.

“I was afraid that Don Hernando would be lonely without you,” said Billy, and looked down upon his prisoner without emotion.

Martin Gunn brought warning to the prisoner the next morning that if he tried to escape again, he would be killed. “We have to discourage desertion,” said Gunn calmly.

“As for that,” said Madelin, “how do I know that death is not reserved for me in the end no matter what I do?”

Gunn shrugged his shoulders.

“There are kinds of death,” said he, and left Madelin to contemplate all that this terse suggestion brought to mind. At any rate, he proposed to attempt no escape again unless with almost reverent care.

At the next opportunity he sounded Billy’s queer mind with another plumb-line.

“Suppose I had slipped four inches of this rapier point between your ribs, Billy, before I left the fore-castle?”

“It was a foolish thing to forget,” said Billy.

He could not conceive of a mind that shrank from murder.

The stay at Port Royal came to a sudden end. It had been the plan to wait there for a considerable time to make allowance for the long overland journey from Cartagena to Peru; then they were to sail to the isthmus, put up the *Careless* in a shallow cove, cross to the South Sea, and coast southward in periaguas or a ship they might chance to seize until they reached Nueva Alcantara to claim the ransom money. Now, however, the captains had news which made them break off their stay at the harbor. They hoisted sail at midnight and ran quickly out to sea as soon as they had gathered the crew from the town together with a few new recruits. The next morning Madelin was freed from his fetters and going on deck he found that they were out of sight of land.

He was curious as to the fashion in which he would be received by the captains but he soon found that they had determined to act as though all their relations with him had been perfectly friendly. The moment they were well at sea, he was admitted once more to the mess and the society of the poop and treated with all due respect. If they resented the manner in which he had refused to join them, they concealed their anger perfectly; even Bartholomew and big Jeremiah Lang seemed willing to stop and chat with him whenever there was a chance. And of the men in the crew, there was only one who gave him black looks now, and that was Joe Naseby whom he had sentenced to keelhauling on the voyage out. The hurts of that worthy had barely healed but his hatred of the judge who had condemned him seemed to have grown. But most of the time of

Madelin was spent with little Don Hernando, for the poor boy had grown sick with longing for his own people and there was only Louis Madelin to bear him company. As for the crew, the roughest of them would have been kind to the gallant youngster but he looked upon them with an unutterable disdain. He was the son of a gentleman of Spain; therefore, only with gentlemen could he mingle unless he chose to disgrace himself; even to the four captains he spoke only when he could not keep silence.

Watching him, it seemed to Madelin that he knew what had made Englishmen the rulers of the sea, for the greatest lord in England, once on shipboard, would not have scorned to spend a moment in talk with the lowest swabber on his boat. There was a tie of brotherhood between them and like brothers indeed they fought shoulder to shoulder in battle. But among the Spaniards there were two classes with a gulf between them. The gentry stood here; all others were an immeasurable distance beneath them. Such an attitude might be the foundation of fine discipline ashore and perhaps it had something to do with making the Spanish pikemen, for a generation, the finest infantry in Europe, but at sea such methods would not go. A land battle might be a game of chess where precision counted; but a fight at sea was a wild hurly-burly and the discipline which counted there was that of instinct and good fellowship. Because he possessed them, the Englishman was ruling the ocean. And the more Madelin talked with young Don Hernando, the more clearly he saw the Spanish character. To those of his own rank, the boy was faithful, gentle, and true as steel. To those beneath him he was a tyrant who valued lives no more than he valued cattle. For Don Hernando, only one person existed on board the ship with whom it was possible for him to converse, and this was Sir Louis Madelin. To the knight's tales of adventure he listened

eagerly and patiently, never daring to interrupt even with questions, and in turn talking out his own heart and giving his picture of life in his father's house in Spain and on the great estate in Peru. For himself, he preferred the life in Peru, and he had himself ridden more than once, he told Madelin with shining eyes, when the bloodhounds ran down fugitive slaves.

"Who are the slaves?" asked Madelin once.

"The Indians—the Incas and the rest, of course."

"How did they become slaves?"

"By the sword and the will of the king of Spain," answered the boy, and felt that the question was completely settled. Madelin did not argue; he could see that the nature of Don Hernando was already fixed as irrevocably as the color of his blood. He was as unchangeable, say, as that other strange youth aboard the *Careless*, young blue-eyed Billy.

It has been said that new recruits were added to the crew at Port Royal, and these men, to the number of fifteen, fascinated Madelin. They were almost without exception big men; in nationality, there were more French than English among them; their skins were one and all sun darkened but their eyes went from blue to black. They wore wide-brimmed hats which rose to a lofty peak, shirts which were never washed, and knee-length linen trousers which were a dull red in color, having been dipped in the blood of slaughtered bulls. One and all carried a make of musket with a spade-shaped stock and a barrel four and a half feet long—throwing a bullet between one and two ounces in weight much farther and much truer than the ordinary guns of the period. They had the finest powder in the world, brought to them from Normandy, and carried in powder-flasks made of sun-dried gourds which were covered with boiled leather and thus made water-tight. Each man came on board with his own tent made into a thin roll and slung behind his shoulders. They car-

ried for wear on shore but not at sea, leggings made of the stoutest bull's hide with the hair left on and turned outward, to secure their legs when they hunted through the dense underbrush of the mainland; and each man wore at his belt not a cutlass but a long and heavy machete with a broad point and a razor edge—a handy tool for cutting a path through stubborn brush and a most deadly weapon in hand to hand fighting.

They were variously termed Master Hunters, Brothers of the Coast, or Buccaneers. That last name, to be sure, had spread far and wide until it had come to be applied to all who hunted Spaniards and the Dew of Heaven on the Main, but it of right belonged to this breed of wild men. They gained it from the practise of bucaning their meat, which they had learned from the Carib Indians. A wooden grating which the Indians called barbecue was raised on poles two or three feet above the camp-fire which was slowly fed with green sticks until the smoke and the heat had cured the meat. The meat itself was preferably that of fat wild boars, but beef was often used; and bucan would not only keep for months, unless placed in the damp, but it was also of a fine red color, had a delicious aroma, and could be eaten as it was without further cookery.

Hispaniola was the happy hunting ground of these buccaneers, or Brothers of the Coast. The island had been stocked with cattle by the Spaniards and the herds had multiplied and run wild along the savannahs of the coast and far up through the mountains of the interior. Some caught the puppies of the wild mastiffs which ranged the island, relics of the days when dogs and horsemen had hunted down the poor Indians; but the majority hunted by stealth and perfect marksmanship. What they killed in the morning they skinned and cut up in the afternoon and bucaned in the evening, then they smeared their faces with grease to keep off the mosquitoes, threw tobacco leaves on the fire so

that the heavy smoke would further trouble the insects, lay down to sleep and were well bitten before morning in spite of all their pains. They hunted for two years at a stretch, returned with a quantity of money to Tortuga, and then proved the hardiness of their stomachs by drinking vast quantities of brandy.

Such were the things that Sir Louis learned about the buccaneers. Aboard ship they did no work which they could avoid, and they were allowed to drift along very much as they would. But Billy assured Madelin that sooner or later they would all prove very amenable to discipline. They only needed to be shown that there was a cash value in it. Moreover, they were of great value in any emergency, even from the first, for they were as daring and skilful sailors as they were hunters, always interspersing their land work with excursions after the Dew of Heaven upon the open Main. At first they held apart by themselves until they discovered that there were already aboard the *Careless* a round dozen who had once been Brothers of the Coast but who had given up their old calling to follow Captain Sunday. After that they drew in with the other men aboard ship; the round of tales was never ending; and there was never a dull minute on the *Careless* as she stood along her course. What that course could be headed for, no one save the four captains knew until the fifth day after they made sail from Port Royal. On this day, all hands were piped into the waist and there Martin Gunn, leaning on a long cane and with a preciousy wrought and jeweled snuff-box tucked under his left arm—for he was a great exquisite—made a speech among them and told them that they were bound for the very heart of the treasure house of the world and that they would not strike sail, if fortune helped them, until they were within striking distance of the famous town of Naruja. That place, by the grace of good luck, they humbly trusted that they might have the pleasure of sacking.

Having made them this speech, Gunn waved his long cane at them and sauntered back toward the poop, followed by a brief and not overstrong cheer. For, bold as they were and familiarized with wild actions by years of such exploits as landsmen could not even comprehend, yet their breath was taken by such a suggestion as had just been made to them. They wanted time to talk it over with one another. Five minutes after Martin Gunn concluded his narration the deck was spotted with at least a dozen rough maps of the town of Naruja and its surroundings, so far as the coast line was known; and a hundred anecdotes concerning it were being narrated. Madelin, who sauntered from place to place, as usual, never speaking, but drinking in a salient word here, and the heart of a long narrative there, learned soon enough that Naruja was indeed the heart of the treasure house, for to it, every year, came the treasure trains from Panama to bring in the gold and the silver which was to be shipped to Spain from the northern coast!

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE WAY TO NARUJA

FROM the maps, Madelin gathered sufficiently full details. The town of Naruja looked northeast upon a narrow roadstead which was sheltered to the west and from the terrible norths by the wide and lofty peninsula of Tanea. At the northeastern point of this headland, overlooking the coast in both directions, across the mouth of the haven to the south and east and across the Rio Tanea to the south and west, there was a lookout with several beacons always ready to light in case of danger being discovered on the wing, so to speak. There were other natural obstacles which made the approach to the town difficult. All except the very end of the peninsula of Tanea was covered with a dense and tropical growth of underbrush and forest, interspersed with marshes and marvelously difficult to traverse, as was generally admitted. If the forest were crossed to come at the town from the rear one must still scale a range of steep-backed hills, while on top of the hills stood a fort, generally heavily garrisoned, especially when, as was now the case, treasure was waiting to be conveyed in the fleet. And, to guard against attack from the sea, this fort carried some very heavy guns which would throw large shot a mile out to sea and so completely command the roadstead.

And, when each map was finally drawn and explained, the maker of the map would exclaim to his auditors: "There's the puzzle, lads. How are we going to crack that nut to get at the meat?"

"How many are apt to be in that garrison?" asked Madelin of a Brother of the Coast who was most vigorously muttering against the whole design.

"Three hundred if there's a man and boy. Three hundred at the least, and most like, nearer to five hundred. Besides that, there's the men of the town. Perhaps three or four hundred at this time of year. And all of them good enough fighters and very well with firearms. They keep a war with the Cimeroons and go on man hunts every month or so. They're used to standing fire and they shoot well—for Spaniards. Besides, there are slaves in the town, negroes who will fight if they are well led. And, aside from all this, there may be the crews of several ships on shore, and in addition to the rest, the Indian village lies back in the woods a mile and a call on them would bring down two thousand of the red rascals!"

Madelin was amazed. It seemed, at the least, that there were apt to be eight or nine hundred white men in and around the town, of whom three hundred at the smallest count were sure to be soldiers on garrison duty there. And with eighty men, and twenty-five of these all unused to battle, the *Careless* was planning to attack this strong place!

"Why," as another sailor said, "it's an army in a fort, and we're a handful in an open skiff!"

But if half of the men shook their heads, the other half shrugged their shoulders and said simply that if luck were with them they could do anything, and if luck were against them, no matter what their numbers, they could do nothing.

The next day they made a sail to the leeward, bearing west almost in their own course. They overtook her handily and when they boarded her, she proved to be a Spanish ship from Cartagena, loaded with cacao and flour and bound for Naruja. The boarding party consisted of Martin Gunn, in command with four oars, and

Madelin by special invitation accompanied the boat. As they neared the Spaniard, which was a small one of not more than forty tons, they observed something thrown overboard on the lee of the vessel, so that they saw only the flash of the water as it splashed. But Martin Gunn rowed straight to the spot, saying that the rogues might have tossed a treasure away to keep it from English hands. When they came to the place, they saw something glimmering in the blue of the water, sinking slowly, and it was drawn up with a boathook. It was the dead body of a blond-haired man of forty or a little more and the corpse was in a condition which brought a hoarse muttering from the oarsmen. The poor fellow—and by the color of hair and eyes it could be presumed that he was English—was naked. All the front part of his body was blistered and literally cooked by the direct heat of the sun. Around his wrists and ankles were bloody weals where he had been tied with ropes. The eyelids had been cut away from his eyes, which were horrors not to be described; on the whole, it was very plain that the devils on board the Spaniard had tied this man out on the deck of their boat and exposed him in this condition to the terrible blaze and heat of the sun. When they were overtaken by a sail which, at the last moment, proved to be English, they discovered that their work was not quite completed and to finish it, they had stabbed their victim to the heart and then thrown him overboard to keep him from the eyes of his countrymen. Martin Gunn tied a weight to an ankle of the corpse and let it sink. Then the small boat rowed silently on to the prize, while Madelin leaned in his place with one hand pressed across his eyes, his mind reeling with horror. They found the ship manned by a crew of half-breeds and negroes, under a Spanish commander whom they took back to the *Careless*.

He attempted to be very cheerful on the way, com-

plimenting his captors on their boldness in penetrating into these Spanish seas, but when he received not a word in reply, he grew silent and white. On the *Careless*, the word of what had been seen in the water was communicated to the three other commanders and they asked the Spaniard for an explanation. His tale was fluid enough. The Englishman, he said, was a renegade from his country and his religion and had taken service on that little bark, but in the middle of the voyage, growing weary of work, he had tried to persuade the negroes to mutiny and seize the ship. Accordingly, he had been punished with death, and a horrible death, to impress his savage crew.

This tale was told in the cabin of the *Careless*, where the captains and Sam Coates, the chirurgeon, and Madelin himself listened. It was accepted in silence while they went on to ask him in what condition of defense was Naruja. He told them that he had been at Naruja only a month before, and at that time there were six hundred soldiers in the fort and in the town, besides four hundred other men capable of bearing arms; that the treasure from Panama had not yet come in, but that a strong guard was being kept to make ready for its arrival.

"If there are a thousand men in Naruja," said Jerry Lang when this tale was ended, "we might as well about ship. But I am certain that this fellow has lied. Have over a few of his crew and we'll question them."

The Spaniard did not understand English, but he made out the ring of Lang's voice well enough. Madelin saw one gleam of terror appear in his eyes; then the man settled back and sighed. Madelin knew that he was prepared to die.

The small boat hastily brought in three of the negroes. They were given a heavy round of brandy, promised absolute immunity from harm, and then told

to speak freely though they were in the presence of their captain, whom it was hinted would probably never command them again. The story they told agreed with their commander's in nothing. The Englishman, they said, had been picked up in a small boat in which he was making what sail he could to the mainland; the captain had picked him up and as soon as he discovered his nationality without a word of explanation had caused him to be stripped and exposed on the deck and had stood by to enjoy the screams of the victim. As for Naruja, they knew nothing about it, except that they were sure that the captain had not been there within three months, for they had been aboard his ship all that time and they had not touched at the treasure town.

To this damning tale the captain listened without a word of protest and when Bartholomew, who was the captain of the day, asked him what he had to add in contradiction of this evidence he merely shrugged his shoulders and remarked that he knew he was already judged, and that from that time he would keep his thoughts and his conversation for God who was about to receive his sinful soul.

To this resolution he adhered with a firmness that astonished Madelin through the horror that followed. For, just as he had served the Englishman, so they served him. He was tied out on the deck, and a Brother of the Coast named Cunningham, noted for his ferocity, was sent out to slash away the man's eyelids. Cunningham listened to this command, demanded a dram of rum for his work, and, having poured the drink down his throat, went out and stood beside the Spaniard, smoothing the razor edge of his knife on the leathery sole of his bare foot. The Spaniard was already in the most awful torment. For even the eyelids are a small shelter against the fierce face of the sun, and his naked body was puffing into blisters. Then he kneeled beside

the victim and Madelin noted that every man in the crew turned his head to the sea.

There was only a moment's pause; then Cunningham rose.

"The damned knife slipped," said he.

Rather than perform his odious office, he had stabbed the Spanish captain to the brain.

CHAPTER XIV

FORT NARUJA

WHAT he had seen of Spanish handicraft in the Indies had made a great impression upon Madelin. He had loved battle in other days for the sake of its excitement; but he began to feel a hungry desire to get at work with his sword, hand to hand, and kill like a butcher. He went to Jerry Lang the next day and announced that, if he were acceptable, he wished to be a volunteer in this next assault, though for that occasion only. Jerry Lang grinned upon him and dropped his chin upon his fist so that the wiry yellow beard thrust out wildly in all directions.

"It's what I call the Spanish Fever," he said. "Some get it quick, and some get it slow, but when it comes inside the blood, there's nothing so hard to get out. We'll be happy to have you, Sir Louis; maybe we'll need you before that work is over."

And he showed the knight all the plans which had been drawn up for the engagement. The *Careless*, carrying forty men led by Solomon and Tom Bartholomew, was to sail at midnight around the head of Point Tanea, keeping so far out to sea that there would be no danger of her white sails being seen from the shore through the thick tropic darkness. Then, striking all sail except a single fore sail, carefully blackened with tar and dirt so as to be less easily visible, she was to steal straight up into the harbor until she was fairly close to the

shore, but not close enough to be easily seen. She was to take with her not only her own two boats but also the fairly large skiff which was towed behind the Spanish flour boat. With these three, she could carry her whole crew ashore.

Three men were to be left on board the *Careless*, to guard the negroes and to see that they made no alarming noise which the inhabitants of the town or any other ships in the harbor might hear. With muffled oars, the remaining thirty-seven were to row softly in to the beach, land, leave seven men to guard the boats, keeping them a little distance out in the water from the edge of the sand and ready instantly to thrust in to receive their comrades in case a sudden retreat was necessary, as it was very apt to be.

This left thirty men, besides Bartholomew and Solomon, to advance into the town. It would not be fully two hours past midnight, and if all went well, it was not unlikely that they might, by moving in a thin column and guarding their steps, pass clean through the town of Naruja without giving the alarm to the townsmen. If they were successful, they were to continue through the town and pass on up the steep slope of the hill on the top of which lay Fort Naruja. Here, diverging to the right toward the easier ground, they were to try to overpower the sentries and take the whole place by surprise, for except that surprise worked with them, they would, of course, be helpless in the hands of three or four hundred soldiers. But in the meantime, if they should be discovered and repulsed in their frontal attack, they were to be relieved and assisted by an assault on the rear of the fort in the following manner:

Under Jeremiah Lang and Gunn, the remaining forty were to embark in the Spanish prize, and when night fell they were to sail her along the northwest side of the headland until they reached the mouth of the

Tanea. They were then to march across the four miles of forest and marsh-lands until they came out among the hills behind the fort which overlooked Naruja. Here they were to wait and rest after their exertions, until they heard the sound of the other party advancing toward the front of the fort, when they were instantly and silently to attack from the rear, not making a sound until they were within the ramparts. The advantage of this double plan was not only that they would take the town in front and rear at the same instant, but that in case they were overpowered and cut off from access to the harbor, they would still not be absolutely ruined. For the seven men at the boats could hasten back to the *Careless* as fast as their oars would carry them, and, reaching the ship, they would stand away to sea. In the meantime the whole defeated body of the English could retreat through the forest and marsh to the mouth of the Tanea, where they could embark in the prize and rejoin the *Careless* out at sea.

To all of this Madelin objected: the danger of subdividing a force which was perilously small at the best, and also the great chances that no matter how well one-half of the scheme went, it was completely ruined if the other half failed. It was vain for him to speak of generalship, however. The plan they had evolved suited the buccaneers to the ground. For they loved complicated schemes. A day before the coast was approached, the entire ship's company was instructed in what was to be expected of each man. The ten men who were to guard the *Careless* and the boats were selected among those who had been most severely hurt in the engagement with the *Madre de Dios* and the others were given leave to volunteer in either party. As had been expected, the crew divided almost equally, only two more choosing to follow Lang than desired to accompany Solomon. The number was evened by lot,

the forty were placed aboard the prize—Madelin accompanying them and making, with the commanders, the forty-third member of the party, and the two ships parted company as the evening drew on.

It was already dark when the prize sailed sluggishly into the mouth of the Tanea River and Madelin breathed the thick and tainted air filled with the scent of decaying wood and vegetation, and the steam from the marsh lands. They grounded the little ship almost at once on the left bank of the stream, made her fast to a tree with a cable in case a hurricane should rush out of the night and sweep her away to sea, and then started overland.

They marched in a single long column. At the head went Martin Gunn, for he was known to be the finest woodsman on the ship, with the instinct of an Indian for forest ways. Behind him came Lang, carrying a compass by which they were to guide themselves through the bewildering thick of the forest. The third man was Sir Louis Madelin, and then the remainder of the party strung out behind, being brought up in the rear by that stalwart chirurgeon, Sam Coates, who, being a man of great brawn, carried surgical instruments, bandages, and some salves and medicines, together with a cutlass and a brace of long double-barreled pistols which were his choicest possessions. In this array they made their march, and a formidable one it proved to be.

The beginning was pleasant enough, for the ground immediately beside the river was actually a little higher than that farther back, and they entered a rather open forest, stirring up bright hosts of fireflies in their passage, and swinging along at a gay pace. This pleasant going did not last more than a hundred yards; then they descended into a marsh and from that point the journey was a grim affair. For they were either pressing through a grisly thicket, harassed by clouds of great mosquitoes, or else they were up to their waists or even to their necks in the filthy waters of the marsh. They

dared not show a light which might be seen and give warning of their coming to the men of Naruja; therefore they could only fumble on through the darkness, now on a bit of firm ground, now slipped into the unseen slime of the marsh, sometimes spitting and cursing when it reached their mouths. The bottom of the marsh, besides, was covered with rotting limbs of trees on which the footing was most precarious, and sometimes there were depths of mud which pulled at their feet like quicksands. All the skill of Martin Gunn was useless in such going as this. They could only strike straight on through the grisly gloom, while, in occasional breaks of the forest, Lang consulted his compass by the dim starlight and they laid their course true again.

They consumed a full hour before they had completed the first mile, and by this time they were so exhausted that the men began to murmur and talk of turning back. Here Jeremiah Lang, who did not suffer a complaint or even an oath to pass his lips during the whole journey, gathered his men about him on one of the few pieces of firm ground which they encountered and made a little speech to them in which he pointed out that the return journey to the prize ship would be almost as terrible as that which lay before them, for they knew there was nothing but marsh behind them whereas they might hope for better ground ahead at almost any time. He also declared that if they failed of heart now they were condemning to death their companions in the other half of the crew before the fort or in the town. For his own part, he declared that he could go straight on even if he had to go alone.

This checked the murmurs for the time being, but after that Lang, who was a Hercules in strength, went up and down the line, cheering the failing spirits of the others and even carrying their muskets for them for a distance until their strength was recovered. The second hour was like the first, but being very weary they

covered even less ground. The third was a nightmare of blind struggle which Madelin could never afterward recall without a shudder. They were now weary to the point of numbness, but still they had sense of the mosquitoes which covered their faces and necks and even swarmed about and bit through their shirts. It was about this time that one of the men cried out in a muffled voice. He had been bitten in the calf of the leg near the ankle by a water snake. If it were venomous he was a dead man; but being a hardy Brother of the Coast, the fellow went resolutely ahead and said that he would live to drive a bullet into at least one Spaniard before he gave up the ghost.

They had now spent three hours of the severest labor and had covered a scant two miles and a half. There still remained a mile and a half, according to their estimate, to be covered before they reached Naruja, and by this time they were so far spent that they could not have struggled ahead another quarter of a mile. But here the ground began to be firmer and presently they came out upon a low upland with clean grass under foot. The whole line sank down in exhaustion and remained prostrate for nearly half an hour, with no more sound than a few groans of relief as their aching muscles began to be restored by rest. They were now in a fever of thirst, one and all. The heat of the night was close and violent and their tremendous labors had caused them to exhaust their water-gourds. Some few even drank of the marsh water, and were immediately seized with nausea. When they had recovered, the whole party went ahead, it now being the fourth hour of this march and close to midnight, when the *Careless* should be entering the harbor of Naruja.

Advancing as fast as they could, three or four of the strongest scattered ahead to search for water, and Gunn, who was among them, presently found it—a small stream running through a sandy bed toward the marsh.

The whole column rushed for it, threw themselves on their bellies beside it and drank as much as they could hold. As for Madelin, he drank so fast and so much that afterward he lay half fainting on the bank, with the blood thundering in his forehead with a great, slow pulse. A half hour was spent by the stream. Then they staggered to their feet and marched forward again. By the end of the fifth hour they came from the edge of the forest and saw above them the hills, with the squat outline of the fort directly before them. They were not yet close enough to the fort to be of immediate service in case their confrères from the *Careless* should deliver their attack at once, but Lang and Gunn commanded the party to lie here on their backs, instructing them to throw out their arms and lie motionless. For, as they explained, what they needed now were steady nerves which could handle guns effectively, and great weariness would set their hands shaking. The company obeyed willingly enough, and half of the sixth hour was spent in repose in this fashion. Then they were roused by the leaders, and the party went slowly, slowly up the slope.

A faint light was beginning in the east, and told that the moon was about to rise, which would increase the difficulty of their undertaking by more than half, for only in the dark of the night could they hope to master the town and hold it long enough to carry off treasure.

In the meantime, it seemed every moment that the town was waking. A dog ran out of the forest at their heels, howled wildly at the sight of them and then fled to the town, while fifty other dogs in Naruja, hearing the outcry, began to add to the clamor. Some of the men prepared their pieces for instant action and raising their voices demanded that they be led at once to the charge before the walls of the fort and its guns should be manned. But Lang and Gunn at once com-

manded them to be silent and ordered the whole party to drop flat on the ground.

This they did, and waited there some minutes. They heard a voice from the fort, presently, and then a light stirred at a window; but the light went out, the voice did not speak again, and as the dogs stopped howling, Naruja was buried in silence once more. A whisper began to go up and down the company that the fort must have been alarmed—that the party from the *Careless* had already been found and mastered and from them it had been learned that a second division of the privateers was preparing to attack the fortress. One or two declared that they saw forms stirring among the trees which they had recently left, as though armed men were stealing behind them to cut off their retreat. Every instant multiplied the rumors and the confidence with which they were asserted.

Madelin himself was nervous as a boy, and he listened in amazement to Billy, who had followed him close throughout the march and now lay beside him humming softly to himself. He had confessed to Madelin that he had been instructed to shoot the latter should the judge attempt to escape to the Spaniards; in the meantime, he was looking forward to the fight with the keenest anticipation. But Madelin could not boast the same calmness. He had lain in ambush before; he had fought in desperate night assaults, but never where the prize was so great or the danger of failure so terrible, for if they failed and were captured by overwhelming odds, he remembered the body of the Englishman they had drawn from the sea. But through tortures as terrible as this they must perish, he thought. And he resolved to save one bullet for himself in case of the last necessity.

They were called upon to rise and go carefully forward. It was done. They climbed the first slope. They crossed the flat at its top and came under the last ascent

before the wall of the fort began. There they were bidden to lie down again, and looking upward they saw, against the increasing moonshine in the sky, the form of the sentinel who paced steadily backward and forward on the wall, growing every moment more distinct. It seemed no less than a miracle that he should not see so many enemies who lay so near him! Here Billy slipped like a snake from the side of Madelin, and working to Lang, begged leave to try his luck climbing the wall and striving to stick a knife into the back of the guard, so that the way before them might be clear. Lang had no chance to assent; for, from the heart of the town before them, a dog yelled, a gun exploded, and suddenly an English cheer rolled to them through the night.

CHAPTER XV

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GARRISON

SIR LOUIS MADELIN, when he heard that uproar, could not help but look back over his shoulder to the trees whose shadows now looked like a haven of safety; for the whole town of Naruja had wakened with miraculous quickness at the sound of the foreign voices. From the district near the first outbreak rolled a harsh clamoring that spread far and wide, but almost at once from the fort itself, before them, came a wild yell of triumph and fury from hundreds of throats. It was not the random and scattering shout of men wakened from their beds hastily and in many places. It was the thunder that comes from soldiers in ranks. There could be no doubt about it now; Naruja had wind of the coming danger and was prepared for it, and the unlucky expedition instead of setting a trap had walked into it. The fort, from end to end, was dotted and streaked with lights, as though many lanterns had been unhooded at that instant and men were running here and there. A great gun roared—perhaps at no particular target but simply because the cannoneer could contain himself no longer.

And from the men behind Lang and Gunn, not so much as the volume of a whisper arose; then they were aware of the voice of Jeremiah Lang talking quietly to them, and making himself heard, in some fashion, in spite of the distant thundering of voices and guns in the town and the nearer uproar in Fort Naruja.

"We'll go up that wall without a sound, lads," he told them. "We'll eat our pudding with our mates, to-night. And if it breaks our teeth, we'll keep right on eating. After me, hearties! After me!"

And he went up the slope toward the base of the land wall of the fortress, a huge figure, looming indistinctly in the blended moonshine and midnight, but more easily distinguished for the red of a silk scarf which he had wound around his head for this expedition in lieu of a hat. Martin Gunn, running to the right, showed himself in front of that section of the advancing line, but the privateers needed no encouragement now. For the majority of them it was the twentieth combat, and in the new recruits from the hold of the *Madre de Dios* pride took the place of battle eagerness. They lagged not a step behind in the march into peril.

When they reached the wall they found that no sentinel remained to look down upon them. In this point, at least, the plan had proved most true to the fact, so it seemed. But the seeming might well be false. Behind that wall there might linger a hundred or more soldiers with muskets loaded, with nerves steady and confident, ready to blast away the first line of buccaneers who appeared above the top of the rampart. At least all of these possibilities occurred to Sir Louis Madelin. And he lingered a little behind, pretending to slip and fall upon his knees. He was never one to begin a battle or to lead a charge. He liked to range behind and wait for his opening; or, if matters went ill for his side, a rearward position was often most convenient for the flight. Certainly his pride was not foolishly inconvenient when it came to such a matter as a battle in the field.

Cat-footed Billy was the first to the top; then he threw down a rope which he had carried with him and caught the ends of other lines which were tossed to him.

These he made fast and presently by every line a thick stream of the pirates went up the wall; Madelin was among the last, and when he gained the crest he lay flat on his belly for a moment to regain his wind, to let the work of climbing cease to unsteady his hand, and to survey all that lay below him.

The fort was a simply contrived affair. The walls consisted of heavy palisades driven in side by side and two rows thick; behind these was packed beaten dirt and mud which had put forth grass and made a natural green mound. The top of this earthen wall was a little lower than that of the wooden one, in which embrasures had been cut to allow the muzzles of the guns to peer out, looking on all sides, but chiefly out to sea. Within the enclosure of the walls stood a building of considerable size which served as barracks for the troops and several smaller structures for the commandants and for supplies. Past the windows of these houses Madelin saw shadows move—one or two laggards who had not yet hurried to the walls. On the sea-wall nine-tenths of the garrison were clustered. At the guns stood the chief gunners with their lighted matches like fireflies glowing in their hands; here and there moved an officer, a splendid, dimly glimmering figure with the increasing moonshine gilding his armor; and there was a swift jangling of voices which did not bespeak extraordinarily strict discipline among the Spaniards. It was not an unpleasant picture; there was just enough light to em-purple the reds and dull the brightest blues; and now a red glow began to lift in the town. Either the buccaneers or the townsmen had fired a house.

“Fools!” muttered Cunningham, the Brother of the Coast, as he slithered over the wall near Madelin. “They’ll make the light for the Spaniards to shoot them by!”

And he dropped from the wall to the inside of the fort with his machete swinging in his hand while he

was still in the air. At that moment half a dozen soldiers, perhaps sharply remanded back to their posts on the land wall by their officer, hurried around the corner of an outhouse and came in view of the forms which were straggling across the top of the fort.

"Treason!" cried a voice among them in Spanish, and he fired his gun at random and set the good example of flight. Yet he did not take half a dozen steps. The shadows beneath the wall were swarming with the forms of the buccaneers by this time and a dozen of them leaped out at the little frightened cluster of Spaniards. The latter, dazed with surprise, were no match in activity for the barefooted seamen who had thrown away their shoes before they scaled the wall. There was a scattering yell; then the soldiers went down to a man and the wave of the pirates washed over them with a wild yell which multiplied them into a host.

"Captain Sunday!" they shouted. "Sunday! Sunday!"—oh, strange war-cry for those butchers of the sea!—and they made at their enemy.

To the latter it seemed a well-known name. They turned from their post on the sea-wall with cries of dismay for though the pirates, who were advancing through the town, were still not in sight of the fort, yet their presence was a constant threat and the men of Fort Naruja felt themselves taken between two forces, and these of undetermined size in the night. Some, in a panic, cast themselves over the walls and fled straight toward the town, shouting treason; others hesitated and even dropped their guns, quite ready to flee but hardly knowing in what direction to run. But their commander and one or two of their officers now jumped down from the parapet and stood to meet the shock of the charge of the privateers, waving their swords and calling upon their men to remember the glory of Spain and fight like heroes. A good number rushed to give them backing, and so the swarm of buc-

caneers shocked against a human wall under the lea of the sea-rampart.

The first ranks of the Spaniards melted under them like straw before the touch of fire; others came from the wall to fill the empty places; they came with muskets, as a rule, and these were foolish weapons for a hand to hand encounter. Having been once discharged, they could only be swung like clubs, and very awkward clubs in the face of the darting, slashing cutlasses. So they cast away the muskets, and those who had swords drew them and fell on.

It was a merry time in the battle for Sir Louis Madelin. He danced here and there through the battle line with the narrow rapier flickering in and out and back and forth through the gloom. Sometimes he leaned under the raised arm of a sweating buccaneer and stabbed in the crowding ranks before them and then was gone again. Sometimes he swerved into a gap, defending himself through his uncanny agility of foot and body. Sometimes he threw himself on the ground and stabbed upward. Sometimes he picked out a single opponent, closed with him for an instant, and left that man dead when he turned. The small-sword dripped with blood; the very grip of it became slippery and greasy. And finally he drew back to take breath and cleanse his weapon.

He squatted coolly, scrubbing the rapier in the sand and watching the progress of the battle. It was mostly hand work, of course, but seven or eight of the Brothers of the Coast had not struck a blow. They lingered on the flanks of the attack loading their long muskets with wonderful speed and bringing down a man at every shot. The flashes of their weapons threw sudden brief glares which showed Madelin glimpses of death as men fell, or of faces wildly distorted with the joy of battle, or the glitter of a weapon falling in mid-stroke and lost in darkness again before it lodged home. There was no

moon, now. The wind had changed and was blowing violently, rolling thick cloud masses across the sky. Half the stars were already put out and in the upper air the advancing pinnacles and black towers of the storm were illumined by the moon. He saw these things and he saw, moreover, that matters were going hard with the buccaneers.

For the numbers of the soldiers in the fort must have been fully three hundred, and though many of these were now fled, wounded or killed, there remained more than enough to overwhelm the pirates. Moreover, this was not a battle at sea, and the Spaniards were safe on their own plane, the land; they knew every nook and cranny of the place; familiarity with their surroundings gave them confidence, and they walked safely where the pirates were stumbling. Above all this, the weakness of the men from the *Careless* in numbers was at last apparent in spite of the havoc they were working and the volume of their bloodcurdling yells. The Spaniards, having staggered, now stood firm, then began to thrust back the sailors before them.

From their fellows in the town, there seemed no hope of quick relief, for the noises of guns did not roll any closer to the fort and the cheering of the townsmen grew louder every moment. So Louis Madelin, observing to himself that this was an even madder battle than that for the *Madre de Dios*, began to concern himself with his retreat. For, as he said to himself, one man could not turn the tide in favor of the pirates; it would only be to add another victim to the massacre.

These were the philosophic conclusions of Madelin, and he drifted back toward the rear, noting that on either flank bodies of Spaniards had curled around the main force of Lang's men and that the Brothers of the Coast, on both wings, had dropped their muskets and fallen to heartily with their machetes. At this moment he moved past the door of a small hut, built with walls

of the most immense size, and from the black mouth of this cavern two guns blazed at him.

He was unhurt, but he dropped to his face to stop a second volley. Here were two, apparently, who had been swept into this shelter by the forward rush of the pirates and who dared not issue forth again. So Madelin drew out his pistols and fingered them lovingly. He was not with a pistol what he was with a sword, but the balance of this beautiful pair of weapons was so perfect that he often thought they shot true to the mark by their own volition. In the meantime, seeing him move on the ground, the two in the black of the doorway had opened fire again; one bullet whirred above his head, another struck not a yard before him and stunned his face with a shower of sand. Then Madelin returned the charge. He could make them out dimly—a shadow among shadows on either side of the door. With either pistol he fired; the shadows disappeared; he ran forward into the doorway and almost stumbled over their bodies. One lay across the other, he who was on top being dead and the other fast dying and gasping for a *padre* and water. Madelin kneeled and put his hands on either side of the poor fellow's face.

"It is I—the *padre*," said he in Spanish.

"The English devil has killed me," groaned the soldier. "Alas, *padre*, carry to Maria my crucifix ——"

"Why are you here?" asked Madelin, still in Spanish. "Your brothers are fighting in the open ——"

"The magazine," gasped the dying soldier. "Could we leave it unguarded? *Padre*, hear my sin—there is only one that rests on me, but that one so blank that I know not if prayer will——"

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Madelin, starting to his feet again. "The magazine!"

And, stepping calmly over dead man and dying, he found himself at the top of a broad, low flight of steps cut out of the solid rock. A small barrel stood at the

head of the stairs, and when he rocked it, the weight told him that it was powder. He ran down the steps, and snapping the flint of his pistols two or three times at the bottom, he made out the surroundings clearly enough. It was a low vault supported by rough pillars of the natural rock of great dimensions. Yonder an iron-framed door yawned open. Within must be the magazine. Yes, for beside the door there were two or three more barrels of the same dimensions as that which he had seen before.

With a plan already half-formed in his mind, Madelin ran back up the steps; when he reached their head the scheme was full born. The attack of which the Spaniards had been forewarned was from the front and some twoscore men had been posted along the slope outside the walls to flank the assailants while the cannoneers blew them back to the sea. These outer guards, when the rear attack came, had poured back through the side gates of Fort Naruja to meet the new danger, and now, exactly before him, Madelin saw the gate standing open. To his left fought the privateers, their shouts growing thick with despair. Time was short, very short, before their line would be broken to tatters, but a few seconds was all that Madelin wanted and he laughed as he worked at his mischief.

He knocked open the bottom of the powder keg beside him, a heap of it spilling out; then he kicked the barrel down the steps and heard it carom into the other kegs which stood at the door of the magazine. So a trail of powder had been scattered to the magazine itself; from the heap at his feet he filled the hat of one of the fallen soldiers and, walking to the gate, strewed behind him a small line of the explosive. Now all was ready for his murder trap and he shouted at the top of his voice: "*Careless! This way, Careless! This way for your lives!*"

They were half beaten already, and beaten men will-

ingly give an ear to an order to retire. In a trice they had leaped back from their work and, with Madelin still shouting, they rushed in a swarm for the gate and through it. The Spaniards, bewildered and suspecting a trick, lingered behind them and Madelin, who had recharged a pistol as he waited, discharged it now into the powder train. Red fire spurted up at once and sped as fast as a man could run toward the door of the magazine hut; but there was no need to explain to the soldiery the meaning of that signal. A frantic wail rose from them; then they wheeled and stormed away for safety, some through the open gates, and some rushing across the seaward wall of the fortress. Madelin himself was already among his compatriots where he panted at the ear of Lang, who was cursing and raving and trying in despair to rally the fugitives: "I have fired the magazine; all is well, comrade!"

On the heels of his words, the fire train had reached the broken keg with its many pounds of powder still inside. It exploded with a sound like an immense balloon clapped flat by the hands of a giant—a muffled, puffing noise. Then the hill of Naruja opened to its base and threw its head into the sky, wrapped in enormous sheets of red flame. That light illumined low-sweeping clouds of the storm making them seem like part of the destruction. With the last roar of the explosion came the death shriek of many men, then a hundred screams of agony and terror as huge masses of earth, rock and splintered timber rained downward. The garrison of Fort Naruja was wiped out.

How many were actually killed, Madelin was never to know. Most of the soldiers, perhaps, had managed to run to safety, but scores must have been blotted out in the instant, and as the men of the *Careless* paused and turned at the foot of the hill down which they had fled, they saw dark blocks and fragments of destruction descend out of the night and crash among the Spaniards

who had followed them through the same gate, but a fatal distance behind. Those who were not destroyed were hysterical with terror and scattered in all directions. That section of the storming of Naruja had been terminated by a stroke.

CHAPTER XVI

TREASURE!

IT WOULD be pleasant to say that the soul of Louis Madelin shrank within him when he contemplated the thought of so many fellow mortals blotted from the earth and cast away to the long account, but indeed, remorse did not touch him, and the last thundering echoes of the report had not died away when he was murmuring to himself:

“A grain of wit is stronger than an army. Sir Louis, that was a stroke indeed!”

Then he added to his companions:

“Up hearts, my friends! Naruja is in our hands!”

They were so daunted that their first reply was only a muttering, after which they found voice and gave a roaring cheer, those who were left of them. For seven brave men of the crew had fallen in the place that had been Fort Naruja, and only thirty-five, besides Madelin, strode over the crest of the hill and marched down upon the town.

They descended at once into the scene of a rout. The tremendous spectacle and uproar of the destruction on the hill had daunted the Spaniards who blocked the way of Solomon and Tom Bartholomew; then the crashing cheer of the men of the *Careless* as they marched down on the port gave proof that it was English handicraft which had worked the ruin. So the townsmen, losing heart, gave way at once, and they were running through the streets in small bodies or hurrying to their

homes in haste to secure their valuables, when Lang and Gunn came into the place. They took two or three prisoners for the sake of extracting information, scattered the rest with the mere terror of their approach, and so marched on to the market-place. There they found the other half of the crew waiting for them and in the interim busily smashing in the door of the king's treasure house.

Very few moments were wasted in congratulations. What Solomon's men wanted to know was: Who had devised the scheme for blasting up the fort by the roots without destroying the English who were fighting in it as well as the Spaniards? For an answer to that, they pointed their bloody fingers to Sir Louis Madelin, who was sitting on a stone near by and comforting himself quietly with his pipe. But, though he was apparently intent only on the puffs of smoke which he blew forth, his keen eyes noted and relished every glance of awe and wonder which was directed toward him.

In exchange for those tidings and brief news of how they had struggled through the marsh, they desired to be informed through what folly the second moiety of the men of the *Careless* had unseasonably alarmed the town. The answer was not quite so brief. They had been marching softly, according to the plan, and had reached the plaza in the center of the town when a great dog of the mastiff breed had run out at the column as though set on by an invisible master and attacked old Jenkins, one of the few elderly men in the crew. Jenkins, kicking the brute from him, had snatched out a gun and pistoled the dog which died howling.

The death-yell of the mastiff seemed like a signal which had been awaited by half the town. Instantly, from every door and window that opened on to the square, guns began to blaze and the Spaniards shouted to one another to stand fast and destroy the English dogs and heretics. One man had fallen dead at the first

volley; two more were wounded, and the rest doubled hastily across the plaza to get toward the fort. Coming into the street again, however, they found that a barricade had been thrown across it, behind which many scores of the townsmen swept the narrow street with showers of musket bullets while others manned the tops of the adjacent houses and cast down stones to harass the sailors.

Two more men fell as they came into the face of this second danger, so that the others, seeing their numbers decrease at every moment, stormed the nearest house and converted it into a fort, where they were promptly attacked. They beat off their assailants, who now set fire to the place and roasted them out. They moved into a second house from which they made heavy execution among their swarming assailants. In the meantime, they heard an uproar from the fort and knew that their mates were at work in that quarter, and making sure that both halves of the crew would be certainly overpowered, they made a desperate sally to cut their way to the boats. In that effort, five more men fell, and they were beaten back into the house, where they had remained until the destruction of the fort had scattered the townsmen. At this point they themselves rallied once more and cut down many of the fugitives and put the rest into the complete rout which Lang's men had witnessed as they came down from the hill.

Taken all in all, it had been a battle as bloody as it was short. Fifteen men out of eighty-five, counting the captains and Louis Madelin, were dead. Many others were wounded; and the total number gathered in the plaza now consisted of exactly threescore, the remaining ten, of course, being those who guarded the boats and the *Careless*.

How small a group the sixty seemed as they stood in the square of the town before the treasure house, with half the men busily at work bandaging one another!

Besides, most of those who had fought at the fort had thrown their muskets away when they fled from that place. The whole body was not only weary and diminished in number, therefore, but it was only half armed.

“And if the Spanish whelps can come to know how few we are, and our condition,” said sturdy Tom Bartholomew, as he knotted a cloth about his bleeding head, “we are all dead men before the morning comes.”

They had been assailing the door of the treasure house by the light of the flame of the dwelling which the inhabitants of Naruja had fired; now that fire was quenched in a twinkling by a downpour of rain which came in solid masses as though poured from a million buckets. In a twinkling every man from the *Careless* was drenched and chilled, which worked sad havoc with all their wounds and aches. They crowded under the narrow porch which ran along the front of the treasure house, but even here the rain did not leave them. It roared and drummed and crashed on the roof above them; it swept in gusts under the porch, borne by a freshening wind; worst of all, the plaza was covered ankle deep with rushing currents all in a moment, and there was no dry footing anywhere. To depress them still further, the door of the treasure house held fast in spite of their efforts, and the noise of the descending rain was now joined with the wild ringing of an alarm bell in the belfry of the big church which stood at one side of the square. Half a dozen men went to break in and silence that appalling clangor. But they came back reporting that the stairs to the belfry were blocked with rubble and stone, while the man in the steeple still worked like mad, peeling fast and slow, now great, crying strokes that rang away through the air, now a rattling shower of strokes that brought a listener's heart into his mouth.

They could not imagine what had given the Spaniards

such sudden heart to rally, until it was discovered that one of the three men who had been captured by Lang and Gunn had escaped and slipped away into the night. Doubtless he had found some fellow townsmen skulking near, given them the tidings of the actual smallness of the whole band of the English, and now while one man sounded the alarm, pealing far and wide across the hills and rallying every Spaniard to its voice, the others would scurry here and there to bear the glad word to all they met. Even the soldiers from the fort might have come to their senses by this time, and answering the call of the bell, might swarm back into Naruja, hot for vengeance.

All of these were possibilities real enough, and lest any man of the plunderers should forget, the hideous ringing of the bell kept dinning the warning in their ears; and the fall of the rain, loud as rolling musketry, which forced them to shout to a neighbor not a yard away, frayed the nerves of even the stoutest! So apprehensive had they grown that, when the door finally fell with a racket which was muffled by the sound of the storm, the seekers for the Dew of Heaven stole into the treasure house, hushed and quiet, throwing glances of fear behind them. Louis Madelin had seen armies wavering and about to flee in mad rout. He recognized these symptoms easily enough.

In fact, the whole body would have retreated at that moment to regain the boats had not the thundering voices of Solomon and Jerry Lang beat up some cheer in the hearts of those who could hear them. A few torches were now prepared, kindled, and presently the interior of the house was flooded with light.

That light was repeated on either side and up and down a single long chamber. It seemed at first, to the dazzled eyes of the mariners, that the sheeted rain was still falling and that the light was reflecting from it. But then, as their imaginations grew to fit the fairy tale

which was revealed to them, they understood that on either side the walls were piled high with bullion of great bars of solid silver!

That chamber was fully twenty paces in length. It was packed from end to end with the treasure, leaving a passage down the center. And the heap of bars measured a mass which, if both the stacks had been put end for end, would have extended a hundred and twenty feet in length, with dimensions of ten feet in height and six in breadth. It was heaped like cordwood, and thicker than any cordwood which they had ever seen. Each bar of silver weighed forty pounds, and there were so many of them that the eye dazzled in the effort to count. It could not be guessed at or an estimate blocked out in pounds. It must be measured in cubic feet; it must be scanned in whole tons at a time!

The crashing of the rain was now a more awful menace. For as their eyes viewed this wealth, as they touched its smooth and glimmering surface, as the yellow torchlight streaked along it and dripped from bar to bar, the roaring of the rain was a supernatural voice warning them back from their theft. If it slackened away, it was only to let the maddening clangor of the alarm bell beat through the open doorway and deafen them with new fears.

They detailed ten men to hold the doorway. The rest scattered through the great hall to examine more details. They were not long in finding what was full as well worth seeing as the silver. For, when they battered open some huge and powerfully bound chests at the farther end of the hall, they found that they were piled with new minted gold—round coins stamped with the foolish face of the king of Spain. They dipped their great dark hands into those piles of shining yellow, they raised it up in handfuls and let it shower musically back into the coffers, they laughed hysterically at one another. There were such oceans of this stuff—

yet for a single piece of it, men had done murder. It was here cheapened by abundance. They could not translate such a horde into terms of fine clothes, or armed ships furnished forth for the seas; or rich wines to flow the gutters, or gleaming palaces, where slaves moved at their bidding. They could not reduce this gold to such pictures, but gaping and grinning on one another they only knew that they were playing with joy itself—and death.

For in the midst of their delirium of happiness, their faces would turn white, and starting from the treasure chests, they hurriedly faced about upon the doorway and quaked as they watched the chilled and crouched bodies of their shipmates who stood guard there.

In the meantime, huge Peter Solomon had discovered another door at the back of the hall, and wielding a bulky length of roughly squared timber above his head, he ran against the stout panel of oak, smashing it to splinters with a single stroke.

The fall of that last barrier revealed a little niche in which the torchlight revealed only a single box of no great size, and so weakly secured with a little lock that Lang pried it open with the edge of an axe. He saw within it a heap of pearls thrown loosely together, creaming and glowing softly. This he carried out into the main chamber and brought his men with a shout to look at it. They were not random jewels—the whole proceeds of a fishery heap together—but they were of fairly large size, all of them, and each was a gem of price.

This was the crowning touch; it turned that feast of plenty into a riot of drunken happiness in which danger itself was forgotten, and Sir Louis Madelin, drawing aside, looked curiously over the crew. There were only two sober persons besides himself. The one was Martin Gunn, now deep in calculations of how long

it would take to transport the treasure on mule-back to the ship, and how the town could be saved from recapture in the meantime. The other was Billy. That young worthy sat in a corner paying not the slightest heed to the immense wealth which shimmered around him but busily cleaning and loading his pistols, and bringing a new edge on his cutlass which had been sadly turned by cleaving the steel headpiece of one of the Spanish officers, for Billy had been in the thick of the mischief from the first.

The rest, however, were variously loading themselves with gold, for the silver was quite forgotten. Its quantity made it cheap as lead, but they filled their pockets with coins. They tossed handfuls of it into the air and shouted as it clashed and tumbled on the floor. They had the eyes and the flushed faces of starved men who at last have come upon a feast. When the pearls appeared, they pawed them feverishly, but these were mild things to them. They had come for gold, and here it was ready to their hands! So Madelin found it possible to come to the little box and sift his fingers through the thick heaps which it contained. He spread his fingers wide and when he raised his hand only one gem was stuck in it. That, however, was a dream of perfect beauty, with a soft and creamy luster which seemed to be fed from a source of mild fire in the heart of the pearl. As he looked upon it, he saw it lying in the white hollow of the throat of Mary Winton with her eyes gleaming above it and her coppery hair in shadow. That one pearl he dropped into his pocket and then followed the example of Billy in putting his weapons in order.

Here came a lull in the steady roaring of the rain; the wind fell away, and the startling voice of the alarm bell rang again through the hall. Then, muffled and far, they heard the ringing explosion of firearms from Naruja beach which told them that their boats were being attacked.

CHAPTER XVII

A FIGHT WITH THE PERIAGUA

WHAT that firing told was eloquent indeed! It explained that the Spaniards had not only rallied but that, making sure of the destruction of the English now that the true strength of the marauders was known, they had no care about merely driving them from Naruja but wished to cut them off and make sure of exterminating them in one effort. So they had struck, first of all, at the line of communications of the men of the *Careless*.

So much was explained by that noise of guns which brought the sailors swarming away from their plunder with their weapons in their hands. They looked a wild crew in that smoky, wind-blown torchlight. Hardly a man was without bandages, mostly bloodstained. Some were already growing so stiff with their hurts that they could hardly walk. The gaiety of the treasure finding was gone from their eyes. They looked forth on the cold wet night and shook their fists at the crashing of the alarm bell. For still it rang and sang above them, and now with more than a threat. They cursed it solemnly, with upturned eyes. Then they looked nervously toward their leaders. The latter, after putting their heads together, forced every one of their followers to throw away the gold each carried, because extra burdens might be the undoing of the entire company. Tom Bartholomew made them a little speech. They would march for the shore and encounter the Spaniards who had apparently gathered there. Two things were

possible: the enemy might have stormed the *Careless* and taken her by throwing a mass of men aboard, or else they might be simply patrolling the beach. In the former case they would have to shift as best they could when they reached the scene of action. In the second case, they would fall on the men of Spain and strive to scatter them in rout. If they were successful in this, they could return and remove the treasure at their leisure. If they could not scatter the Spaniards, it only remained for them to cut their way through as well as possible and make away for the boats, which would surely be lying close in to receive them.

Honest Tom, with all the liquor burned out of his brain and body by the hard work he had done that night, concluded his little talk by pointing out the treasure which lay around them and telling every man to let the thought of it double the weight of his strokes. But Cunningham, that lean and sour-faced buccaneer, put into words the thoughts of the entire crew.

“That damned bell in the church has put a curse on all of us; we’ll have no more luck to-night!”

But, though all else was left behind, the pearls were distributed and taken with them when they marched out into the rain, sinking ankle-deep in mud. In bitter silence, save for a stifled groan now and then when the agony of a wound bit deep in one of them, they trudged through the black streets and worked down toward the shore, guided by a light which had begun to glow there. The last houses were a matter of a hundred yards from the water’s edge where the Spaniards had lighted a disintegrating wreck whose flames cast red gleams far out on the harbor and allowed the buccaneers to examine every detail of the scene. They had arrived, in fact, at a crisis which they could instantly appreciate.

More than four hundred men were gathered along the beach and upon a narrow pier which extended into the bay. More than half were men of the town, but

the remainder were soldiers who had been rallied after the disaster at Fort Naruja. There were perhaps a hundred of these and, what was of more importance, their commander had survived the explosion and was now directing all proceedings at the harbor. He had drawn the remnant of his trained men into a body three ranks deep which he kept ready to march in any direction. Their muskets which had been thrown away in their flight had been replaced by others of which there was, it appeared, an ample stock in the town. The townsmen were equally well armed, and by their cheerful demeanor were apparently in high spirits and confident of their powers—a matter of great importance to the effectiveness of irregular troops.

This was the condition on land, but the chief events were now taking place upon the water, events which exhibited the numbers of which the Spaniards could dispose even after their losses at the fort and in the town itself. At the head of the pier they were hastily preparing a long periagua, patching a hole in its side and making ready to launch it, while enough men stood at the pier-head to fill every place in the boat as soon as it was ready for the water. But another long boat, mounting a cannon at the bow and filled with perhaps eighty men, had not waited for the completion of the work upon the periagua at the pier. It had pushed away for the *Careless*, swinging the oars with much enthusiasm and followed by the cheers of the men on shore. As for the *Careless* itself, even now the three boats, rowed slowly and with infinite labor by the seven who occupied them, were just reaching the gallant ship. In the meantime, however, the three on board, in spite of their wounds, had managed to work the sails and the wheel to such effect that they had brought her about and headed her to sea.

“They’ll cut and run, now!” groaned a Brother of the Coast who stood near Madelin. “They’ll be off

packing and leave us here to be fried by the damned Inquisition!"

It seemed, indeed, the only sane thing for that small group of sailors to undertake, wounded and weak as every one of them was. The buccaneers, sheltered from the view of the Spaniards by the flaming of the same fire which made the latter so plainly visible, stood by in gloomy impatience to see the mainsail hoisted and watch the gallant *Careless* make to the open Main. She could have leaped away like a grayhound, for the veering wind was coming from behind her and cuffing her across the starboard quarter. But still the cable was not cut, and the sail did not rise, while the long periagua swept momentarily closer to her with the Spaniards straining desperately at their oars.

"Why don't they move, the fools?" growled Tom Bartholomew. "Are they praying, maybe?"

Such vanities were not in the minds of the fellows aboard, however. For now a flash appeared at the stern of the *Careless* followed by the booming report of a cannon rolling heavily across the harbor. There was an instant of delay, then the triumphant yell of the men in the periagua told that they had escaped from danger. They were now driving in fast to close with their prey; the light from the wreck flamed high, casting a sufficiently bright illumination on the waters for Madelin to make out a man in a shining breastplate but with bared head standing in the prow of the long boat waving his sword to cheer on the rowers. They were putting their craft through the waters like a racer when the second stern gun of the *Careless* spoke, and a muttering of savage joy rose from the buccaneers; for the solid shot, smashing the front gunwale of the periagua, had ranged back through the entire boat, killing men every foot of the way until it cut through the stern.

The periagua lost headway and drifted about into the trough of the waves while the shrill cry of its crew

came tingling to the shore and was met with a roar of anger and grief from the spectators. The second long boat, being launched at the pier-head, was now filling with men who shouted encouragement to their companions under the stern of the *Careless*.

Tom Bartholomew was wringing his broad strong hands in an agony of suspense.

“Home with a new charge! Gallant lads—brave hearts!—a new charge. One more shot will send them scampering—by God, their hands are numb! I could have loaded a whole broadside of guns by myself in this space. But now the Spanish dogs rally and bring their boat to rights. There’s still enough of them to swallow our cripples at the first rush!”

The injured periagua, indeed, had now been swung about by her crew, who were displaying far more heart than men of their nation usually did at sea. But there were among them a few stalwart fishers and these, seeing that the boat still swam and that the men were more disabled by confusion than by deaths or wounds, began to seize the sweeps. The rest followed the example, with the bareheaded man in the prow still in place, shouting encouragement. Another moment and the periagua, which was only a few strokes from the stern of the ship, began to gather headway once more, but now the men aboard the latter, having finally recharged one of their poop cannon, fired it again, and at such a pointblank target that they could not well fail of hitting it. The shot ripped through the bottom of the boat which at once began to welter low in the waters. There was no thought among those who manned it of pressing on to the *Careless* before they sank. They threw away weapons, pulled off armor, boots and jackets, and tumbled into the sea to swim ashore, all save a few poor men who could not manage themselves in water and who now clung to the sinking vessel and shrieked at the sight of the black water which was about to swallow them.

Their voices were lost in the uproar along the shore where even the soldiers had broken ranks and swarmed down to the water edge, as though being a few steps nearer they might be more capable of aiding their perishing countrymen. And this was seen and taken shrewd note of by the calm eye of Jeremiah Lang who proved himself a peerless leader on this night of nights. He called softly to the buccaneers to make ready their muskets, setting them an example by falling prone on the beach that he might fire from a rest. The discharge of his piece was the signal for a volley so well aimed that it caused terrible havoc among the thickly grouped soldiery at the water side. Then Lang sprang to his feet, shouted to his men to follow and headed straight to the foot of the pier. The buccaneers followed in a yelling mass.

The scattering and startled lines of the Spaniards, whose minds had been wholly occupied in watching the drama upon the bay unfold, were able to turn and fire a feeble and ill-directed volley of which not a single bullet went home. Then the English, forgetful of their wounds, rushed among them like lions, broke open a path through the crowd and stepped upon the pier.

The majority rushed straight on to the head of the pier to seize on the periagua which was now about to push off from that point; but here Martin Gunn showed that he was well worthy of his place among the captains by turning about so soon as he had footing on the pier and calling a few to his assistance. That laggard in all charges, Sir Louis Madelin, was instantly beside him, as well as Billy, who remained with Madelin like a watchful dog throughout. A few more of the halt and crippled turned to assist and held back the sweeping charge of the Spaniards until Gunn had kindled the woodwork and the base of the pier was wrapped in flames.

Then they gave back and went to join the main body

of their comrades. There had been a brief skirmish about the periagua. Some of the Spaniards fought heartily enough but they were at a distinct disadvantage, shooting upward while the buccaneers fired coolly down into their midst, rarely missing a mark. A few loose timbers thrown upon the heads of Spaniards put them to flight at last. They tumbled into the water—here not more than five feet deep in the ebb of the tide and waded for the shore, while the English leaped into their places, seized the oars, and gave way for the *Careless*.

What was afterward considered a miracle by all those who witnessed or took part in the adventure was, that while in the first two encounters of that stormy night no fewer than fifteen hale men had fallen, and in this last and hardly less desperate struggle of the three, there was not so much as a single wound received by any one of the buccaneers.

They put out to sea in utter silence except for the random shouts and firing from the shore, and no sooner were they across the bar at the mouth of the harbor than the wind, swinging about a little to the north, began to break up the clouds and let the white moonshine sift through. In the meantime, on a piece of canvas in the waist of the ship the plunder was laid down. It amounted to three double-handfuls of pearls for which they had paid fifteen lives of strong men on the shore to say nothing of a hundred wounds on those who survived, and all agreed that it was a beggarly small return for such an expenditure. But even in their gloom they had hearts large enough to feel some touch of kinder emotions, for when Sir Louis Madelin crowned the little heap of jewels with the great pearl which he had brought away in person, half a dozen brawny hands reached to thrust it back to him, and every voice declared with many round oaths that they would all have been lost in that wild adventure had it not been for him.

“And the devil he keeps in his pocket,” added Cunningham.

So they sailed across the bar of Naruja harbor and as the moon began to shine again out of the troubled sky, they looked back to the red spot on the beach where the last of the wreck was burning and they heard the rapid clangor of the alarm bell, which had beat all this while, die musically away.

CHAPTER XVIII

NUEVA ALCANTARA

WHEN Señor de la Vega was three days from Nueva Alcantara he despatched a messenger on a fast horse to make all possible speed to warn his estate and his household of his coming and to prepare everything for the reception of the master and above all, for Mary Winton. In the meantime, the rest of the party which had been made up by de la Vega at Cartagena, went on comfortably at an easy pace, for they were now traveling on a remnant of the great Inca road which had once passed up and down the coast between the foot of the Cordilleras and the sea; and which the conquerors had allowed to fall into utter disrepair, yet there were still stretches which had defied time and ill use and along one of these they were now passing. It was built of heavy flags of freestone covered with a bituminous cement, now hard or harder than the stone itself. The road passed straight on, over rough and smooth, laid conveniently level, and passing over ravines and depressions by means of masses of masonry which seemed wonderful enough to Mary Winton.

In the long weeks of that march her spirits had recovered and grown higher, for Mary was twenty-one and at that time of life a single day of sorrow and despair is like an age of trouble; the evening begins to forget what was so tragic in the morning. So that, while death itself had seemed an easier fate at first, she had grown almost gay before the journey was

ended, and Don Francisco, who had seemed to her terrible as a dragon when he bought her from the pirates, was now grown a tame dragon indeed. It would have taken the resolute malice of a shrew to harbor spite against him every moment. His thousand courtesies had surrounded her from the first moment when she was in his hands and, what was of even greater importance to her, he rode beside her through all those hundreds of miles as a friend and not as a lover. There were no passionate speeches; there was no haranguing about love and death; he merely chatted at her side to wear out the miles as comfortably as possible, and whatever she might think of him as a husband, she could not help admitting that he made a charming host.

He did not even speak of his hopes that the marriage would be agreed to by her. He continued to assure her solemnly by the honor of a Spanish cavalier that, when she had seen his country and his people, if she found it was not in her heart to love him, there would be no more said, but he would send her safely to Virginia and guard her himself every step of the way. In the meantime, like a man of sense, he begged her to look upon this time she was compelled to spend with him not as a term in prison but as an incursion into a strange, wild land to which many a traveler had hungered to come. For his own part, he swore that no matter what her final determination might be, the joy of having her with him through these weeks and months was every day enough to repay him for a lifetime of sorrow.

And though Mary had common sense enough, she could not help but believe that there was some truth in what he said. Even of Don Hernando he would never speak; he vowed to her that for the sake of seventy thousand pieces of eight the English would march to the moon on a causeway of star-beams and that they would be certain to keep the surety for their

money safe. He had not the slightest apprehension concerning the safety of his boy. Yet this she could not help knowing was mere courtesy on his part. She knew that the little cameo on which the face of his son was incised, hung day and night over the heart of the Spaniard and she had seen enough of the two on the *Madre de Dios* to be assured that he loved the boy far better than his own life.

Thinking of this, the events which had followed the onslaught of the pirates began to appear in a new light to her eyes. Finally it seemed to her that she had been rescued from brutal hands by this gallant gentleman who had endangered the safety of his son and only heir for her sake. And this pleasant fiction was so enforced upon her every day by the gentle kindness of Don Francisco that finally it became a weight in her conscience as though it had been a fact. And sometimes she would tell herself solemnly that it was her duty to give her hand and her heart to Señor de la Vega. For, like most soft and dreaming natures, she was an enthusiast capable of great devotion or perhaps even of great cruelties if her imagination were appealed to strongly enough. That imagination had had nothing but Don Francisco to work upon all these days of loneliness when their train consisted only of half a dozen half-breeds, a few Indians, and some twenty lusty negro slaves. It was de la Vega who laid the course and directed it; he it was who passed first across the half-rotten and swinging bridges which crossed the mountain chasms, and before they reached the plain on the western side of the Andes, she knew that he was a hero. And she knew, furthermore, that he was a gentleman whose life had been stained by only one doubtful action—that of taking her against her will. Yet how easy it is for a woman to forgive crimes which are committed out of love for her!

This evil in him was a small shadow which set his

virtues in a high light. When she thought of vicious and sinister natures, she remembered the face of that man who had judged her in the cabin of the *Madre de Dios*, smiling like a devil and sipping his cup of wine—she remembered Sir Louis Madelin. She was so single minded that she could not hate many at one time; now she concentrated all the fine poison of her anger and her sorrow and heaped it on the memory of the English knight.

Once they had come at evening among the mountains to the brink of a great cleft in the Andes with the voice of a watercourse filling the deeps and the dark of the night already thickening in the gulch. She had looked at it a long while until de la Vega asked her of what she was thinking.

“Of Sir Louis Madelin!” she had replied.

“Of him?” asked the Spaniard gently.

“Because this place seems so perfectly dark and evil, like the soul of Louis Madelin.”

“He is a very gallant gentleman,” said de la Vega, flushing a little.

“Oh,” she had answered, “it is because you are a good man yourself, and because all men admire courage. But when a brave man is wicked—oh, since I have seen his face when I think of the arch-fiend I always see him as I saw Sir Louis—smiling!”

Don Francisco made no reply, for it was his habit, when he disagreed with her, to say not a word until he could gently lead the talk to other channels, and at such times he always made her seem a stupidly impulsive blunderer. On this occasion she had flushed and almost forgotten how she hated Madelin in the greatness of her shame for having spoken so roughly of any man. But afterward her thoughts returned to him again and again; he was like a shadow which trailed softly behind her all the while. And if she grew homesick for her people and her country; if she yearned for her family and her friends and the kind faces of familiar things,

she did not heap the blame for the loss of them upon Don Francisco with his clear, steady eyes, but upon the lean-faced judge who had sent her into a strange land for money!

So it was that by the time they came into sight of the city of Nueva Alcantara she felt that of all her good friends and her true friends in this world, there was none so dear to her as Don Francisco; the very sin which he had committed in taking her against her will made him subtly dearer.

It was a white city which they saw from the low hill their cavalcade had climbed, all the houses, even the huts, shining in the afternoon sun. The very streets seemed to glisten! The plaza was marked by a growth of tall trees, and there were green garden spots here and there among the white, half lost in the blue shadows of the high garden walls. Above all this pleasant town rose the stern face of the church with the round western window looking forth upon them. Such was Nueva Alcantara at the first glance; but it was the setting which made the town a jewel, for the Rio Alcantara passed a comfortable arm around the little city, with half a dozen glistening sails on its breast, and from the river the water was drawn off into strong irrigation ditches which in turn subdivided until at the last a multitude of small fingers pushed the water into the desert. So that wide green plantations everywhere surrounded Nueva Alcantara and Mary Winton could not suppress a little cry of happiness. To Don Francisco that voice was a prophecy of joy to come and as they trotted their horses down the hill and into the town, he was smiling every step of the way.

But they found, as they came into the place, that all was strangely quiet. Here and there, in the doorways, they saw two or three old crones who shaded their eyes and peered up at the procession of the strangers, but no one came to the doors to look out and call a greeting to them. No children scampered in the

streets; only a few geese waddled gravely along behind a leader in one muddy alley, and a scattering of chickens were scratching and picking at the roadside.

"There is a festival," said Don Francisco. "You will see Nueva Alcantara in gala dress, Mary!"

And he pushed forward with more speed to come on the spectacle. In another moment they were in view of it, for they turned into the plaza just as the head of a procession entered it from the farther side. Mary Winton had no time to see all of it. She noted only that the plaza was packed and swarming with spectators gathered in a strange silence—men, women and even little children, white men and red, half-breeds and ape-faced negroes. All their faces were now turned toward the procession which was entering, the head of which consisted of twenty men and women—yes, and she was sure that she saw two mere children in the line—clad in coats of yellow cotton with bright red crosses marked on them before and behind, with fools' caps upon their heads, and great unlighted candles of green wax in their hands, and ropes about their necks. She would have thought it some jovial mummary, perhaps, had it not been for those dangling ropes and the guard of men who walked on either side of the people in yellow and red; besides, through the crowd in the square there passed a murmur of dread and of horror that brought to her cold lips of their own accord a hushed whisper:

"The Inquisition!"

Don Francisco heard it, but he had not waited to hear. He was already wheeling his horse around with a black face of anger and gloom as he directed his men to wheel and retrace their ways, while he caught at the bridle of Mary's horse and led her with him in a round gallop toward the rear. Yet she had seen in the last glance which she cast behind her, a number of scaffolds built around central poles of some size and heaped with a great abundance of fire wood.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHASE

FROM Naruja it was proposed that the buccaneers sail farther down the coast of Darien until they found a safely hidden harbor where they could be feasted with fresh meat and fruits and rest until all the ship's company was recovered from the wounds received in the last battle. This accordingly was done. They sailed slowly east with the periagua rowing and sailing close to the shore, manned by twenty men who kept a sharp lookout for a pleasant harborage. On the evening of the first day the *Careless* sighted and chased a craft which was overtaken just at nightfall and proved to be a ship of forty tons in ballast from Naruja, and sailing only as a messenger to the larger port of Cartagena with a warning that the terrible Captain Sunday was on the coast and with a tale of what he had done with his army of devils at Naruja.

They asked the captain of the ship what had taken place after their departure from the port and he assured them that the town had remained awake the rest of that night bewildered by the series of calamities which had struck down so many soldiers and townsmen. Many, both of the former and the latter, had been so frightened by the explosion which destroyed the fort that they had fled into the woods and were not yet returned when the ship with the warning sailed to Cartagena. Therefore it was impossible to estimate the loss which had been sustained by the Spaniards but at least

it was certain that many scores had fallen and when told that this had been accomplished with the loss of only fifteen English lives, the captain was amazed. The whole town had gone up the hill the next morning and looked at the great rent in the solid rock and the tumbled foundations of the houses in the fort, freely expressing an opinion that this calamity had befallen them on account of their sins. He told them, also, that messengers had hastily departed for Panama to tell the governor of the disaster and warn him to send no more treasure trains for some days, to make sure that the pirates had not taken to the land again to continue their depredations; Naruja also pressed for a number of soldiers to take the place of those who had fallen during that bloody night and help restore the fort to a defensible condition.

Having imparted this information, the captain was allowed to continue on his voyage but aware that the whole coast would soon be stirring to apprehend them, the crew of the *Careless* spent the next day hunting for a shelter with redoubled ardor. The periagua now reported a comfortable shelter in a small harbor where a creek came down to the sea and where an island lay across the mouth of the stream, blocking off the view from the sea and fairly securing the place from the observation of coasters who might come to hunt them down. The *Careless*, accordingly, was brought into the port against the stream, hauled ashore, and careened in the soft mud to have her bottom cleaned and freshly tallowed.

In that place they stayed for nearly three weeks leading a quiet life that was pleasant enough after the long days at sea and the rigors of the battle at Naruja. For provisions they hunted the waree, or little wild porkers whose flesh was delicious; or fished in the rivers; or, when the supplies of flour grew short, they put to sea in the long periagua and rarely failed to

make a prize of a provision boat sailing for Cartagena after a day or two of cruising. In the meantime, they lived on shore in huts made of mud and wattles, and when a forge and anvil had been taken from the ship and set up in the woods, two or three of the handiest at iron-work repaired the *Careless* where she needed re-fitting. A lookout all this while was maintained on the top of the seaward island and it was on the twentieth day of their stay that he hurried down to give warning that four sails had been sighted making straight in for the shore.

The tidings caused high consternation. There lay the *Careless* helpless in the mud, and a dozen of the men had wandered off into the woods to hunt or explore, with Jeremiah Lang at their head! Peter Solomon remained behind, however, and took more than half the responsibility upon his shoulders, though Bartholomew was really the captain of the day. By the direction of Solomon, all hands were piped by the boatswain and informed that four ships, all of some size, were headed for them; that the three provision boats they had captured having all been taken in this vicinity their location had probably been guessed at, and that they must now fall to with a will if they hoped to save their lives. There was only one real chance for them, and that was to right the *Careless* and get her afloat.

It was done. Windlasses were rigged, buckets of water sluiced over the mud to make the hull slide more easily, and in a trice every man was at work in feverish silence. The only idle person was young Don Hernando who stood apart with his hand upon the hilt of the small rapier which he continually wore, gazing at the rest and wondering to see even the knight, Sir Louis Madelin, working as hard as any of the common sailors, while Gunn, Solomon and brawny Bartholomew labored each like two men and gave commands besides. In this way the *Careless* was rushed into the water and floated just

as the prows of several small boats came around the point of the island and headed hastily toward them with the men bending eagerly at the oars. Two were periaguas; four were long boats nearly as capacious; and the total complement of these craft could not be much short of three hundred and fifty men. It was apparent, now, that the Spaniards must have spied out the position of the *Careless* some time before and that they had fitted out the expedition especially to attack them in this place. For the four ships, which could now be seen as they were brought to at the narrow mouth of the harbor, made no effort to sail in as though they knew that the channel was both small and treacherous. In the meantime, there was no time for the crew of the *Careless* to hoist sail. The rigging lay here and there in the huts, where they had been working in leisurely fashion to repair it, and they could only use the good ship as a floating fortress.

To manage her in some wise, they rigged two strong cables, one to a tree on one side of the channel and one to a stump on the shore of the island. In this fashion, keeping the stern cable fairly taut and hauling in heartily on the other, they managed to lay her across the stream with her broadside commanding it. While this was being managed by the majority, half a dozen were hot at work casting the guns loose and loading them so that by the time the *Careless* was in place she was ready for work. One minute more would have been too late, for the two periaguas, strained ahead of the rest, were already a scant thirty yards away and leaping toward them with every stroke of the long sweeps. The broadside now sang toward them, but fired with such haste that only one shot did any damage, smashing through the prow of the leading boat and killing two men. Yet the oarsmen were daunted and backed water, perhaps remembering that fatal attack which the periagua had made against the *Careless* in the harbor of

Naruja. In the meantime, they made play with their heavy bow guns, sending a pair of shots whistling harmlessly above their target, and by the time they had looked about, made sure that their losses were small, and prepared to push in to finish the attack, two of the long boats shooting hastily up from behind, strove to press in between the periaguas and so restricted their searoom that the long sweeps of the latter could not be plied. All four boats fell at once into hopeless confusion. They drifted slowly back down the stream, cursing and raging at one another so that their commanders' orders could not be heard, and all the while the deadly muskets of the buccaneers were emptying benches on the leading boats. The reloaded broadside was fired with better effect; one shot ranged fore and aft through a periagua, making a slaughter. Another knocked in the side of a long boat and sunk it on the spot. The survivors scrambled in among their companions in the adjacent craft, and while the English sent a mocking cheer and much laughter after them, the flotilla drifted harmlessly out to sea. Not so much as a musket ball had touched the *Careless* in this singular combat which forever after gave the name of Confusion River to the place.

Bartholomew and Solomon gave the men no rest after this easy victory. They pointed out that the Spaniards could advance by land and sack the huts with consummate ease if they chose, so one half the crew labored to bring in all the stores from the houses while the rest fitted the *Careless* for the sea. In the evening Lang and the others came trooping home in the nick of time for the Spaniards landed a strong party and dragging up a heavy piece of ordnance had opened fire from top of the island. They had a new risen full moon to give them light and they made such excellent play with their gun that the very second shot plumped into the water a yard from the water-line of the *Careless*.

There was nothing for the English but to make for the open sea, and this in face of four ships the least of which was fully their equal in ordnance and far more heavily manned, while the largest was a staunch ship of nearly three hundred tons. The only advantage for the privateers was that every wound had been healed, their bodies were plumped with long rest and good-living, and their spirits as sharp as the edge of a cutlass. They had the further help of a steady wind blowing nearly off the land, but, even with its aid, when they came near the mouth of the harbor they discovered that to run to sea would be a fatal undertaking. For the four Spaniards had anchored in a semicircle off the entrance with their broadsides converging upon it. Advancing upon them, the *Careless* could bring to play only one gun at her prow while they could rake her fore and aft and the dexterity of the cannoneers on the island proved that the fleet had some excellent gunners aboard. So the Englishman came to anchor, being now secured from the land bombardment by an intervening knoll until the enemy could bring their gun into a new position. The captains now called a council and Sir Louis Madelin was invited to attend.

That fruitful brain of his was now barren of expedients. All that he could devise was to scuttle the *Careless* to keep her from Spanish hands, put themselves ashore, and beat into the land to hunt for better fortune. To this gloomy counsel they listened with attention and greeted it with a respectful silence of some moments as though they needed that time to consider it, for he had twice saved them from destruction and therefore he had the double weight among them of a brave and, what was even more in their eyes, a lucky man. However, he soon learned that a privateer leaves his ship more reluctantly than a lover leaves his sweetheart. The scuttling of the *Careless* was not mentioned by another in that council. Headlong Tom Bartholomew

was for setting all sail and trusting to luck—"the luck which Captain Sunday gave us with his ship," as he put it. Lang and Solomon both concurred in suggesting that they put every man ashore, storm the Spanish position on the island, and so secure their anchorage for the time being at least. But Gunn objected that they could not defend two points against such odds. He now contributed a scheme which was instantly hailed as a master stroke.

According to his advice, their periagua was fitted out with a quantity of tar and tarred wood, all very dry, together with all the easily inflammable matter which they could devise and bring together, containing in addition enough powder scattered here and there to bring the whole cargo quickly into a flame. Then the craft was brought into the center of the roadstead, her one lateen sail was set, and the universally serviceable Billy was seated in the sheets supplied with a slow match and as naked as he was born. He was directed to aim the boat at the largest of the Spanish ships, the big boat of three hundred tons, and when he came near her, to fire the periagua and dive into the water where it was known he could swim like a fish. Billy performed these commands with perfect coolness and ability. He sailed the periagua straight at the admiral until he was over half the distance between her and the *Careless*, then he fired the powder trains which instantly ran sheets of flame through the cargo and set it all afire, while Billy dived over the gunwale with the red heads of the flames already shaking in the air high above him.

In the meantime the big Spaniard, after hailing the approaching vessel as though suspecting that it came with a flag of truce to open negotiations, had finally fired a gun as a signal for her to heave to, but now the sudden burst of fire proved that she was an enemy no less deadly because silent. A yell of indignation

and alarm sounded from every ship of the four. They opened a wild fusillade through which the little peragua, now belching forth columns of smoke and fire, continued steadily. The fire burned her sail to a crisp, but still the wind cuffed her along, though she veered a little and bore down now at a point between the admiral and the vessel next in line to her toward the shore. Both ships did not wait to sink the blazing fire-ship with their cannon but promptly cut their cables, hoisted sails as fast as they could make it, and stood away for safety with the peragua laboring at their heels, until with half a dozen round shot crashing through her hull, she began to stagger and sink low in the water.

But she had made a hole through which the *Careless* was now aimed. That light heeled vessel, with her mainsail and foresails spread, and the great square topsail drawing in the wind more than all the rest added together, lurched out of the harbor and stood swiftly down for the hole in the line. She went through with the water boiling in her wake while the two Spaniards who remained in the line vainly set their guns bellowing. For, in spite of all their preparations, they were taken a little by surprise. One heavy shot carved its way through and through the *Careless*, but it was well above the water-line. She gave them her own guns one by one and then stood away on the port tack while they imitated their admiral, slipped their anchors, and made sail as fast as possible for the pursuit.

For two hours she stood away under the lee of the shore without, to the amazement of the crew, gaining an inch upon the foe. In fact, the four ships, keeping farther out at sea, even began to gain upon her. It became plain that they were favored by a heavier breeze, but just as the *Careless* prepared to swing away into their own course, the wind failed altogether and left pursued and pursuers tossing idly in the waves.

CHAPTER XX

LOST!

THE first move of the Spaniards was to send out their fleet of small boats in the hope that they might be able to maneuver until they lay off the bows of the pirate and so lay her abroad without coming into the danger of more than one of her guns. But putting out two anchors, the privateers managed to haul their ship about so that she constantly presented a broad-side to the enemy. The signal of a gun fired from the admiral finally recalled the boats from this fruitless work and they were no sooner gone than the *Careless* was drawn away steadily without the aid of so much as a capful of wind. Rowing ahead with the skiff, they dropped the anchor at the full length of the cable, which was then drawn in by all hands. The skiff fetched it ahead again, and the process was repeated, putting the *Careless* a cable's length on her course with each repetition. They had gained a furlong in this fashion before the Spaniards discovered what was wrong. They immediately began to imitate the process, but such was the adroitness and the strength of the pirates that they more than counterbalanced their lack of numbers and still made headway until the enemy concentrated all of his strength upon his two lightest ships, each of about the tonnage of the *Careless*.

These now began to draw up hand over hand. They came within long range, after which the *Careless* opened

with her stern guns. Two or three shots flew wild, then they began to hit the mark and the Spaniards could not endure the game. They warped their ships about, therefore, and let fly with one broadside gun by gun, then with another. Here the promise of good marksmanship which the pirates had noted before was fully lived up to. For one thing, the waves had so fallen away that they only lifted now and again in gentle swells and firing from a deck was much like firing from land battery. In all, they discharged twenty guns, of which fifteen shots missed completely though always near the mark, but of the remaining five, three smashed squarely into the poop and made it a ruin, dismounting the two cannon which looked aft and so silencing the fire of the buccaneers; another shot struck the stern between wind and water and made sad work for the carpenter; but worst of all the twentieth cannon ball, flying high, struck and carried away that unlucky topmast which had twice before failed the *Careless* in need. After this the *Careless* was drawn on out of range but, as Billy said: "They have put lead in our heels," and this proved to be true with a vengeance when, a quarter of an hour later, a brisk wind sprang up so that all five vessels were instantly sailing large.

Very gallantly did the *Careless* now uphold her reputation as a grayhound of the seas, for even with her topmast gone and only the fore and main sails for motive power she at first held her lead and presently began to increase it until the wind at last fell away again, though not to a complete calm. The lack of a topsail was now dreadfully apparent for the upper wind was still moving with some velocity and the Spanish admiral, with her towering masts, began to take advantage of it at once. With every inch of canvas which she could crowd upon her tops, she now overhauled her mates and stood rapidly down upon the doomed Englishman.

There followed a sad consultation on the wrecked poop of the *Careless*. Tom Bartholomew with tears in his eyes—for he loved the trim ship which Captain Sunday had given them—cursed the day that had brought them into this tight corner and demanded that they bring the ship to and show the Spaniards their teeth. Grenville, he said, had faced greater odds and had almost beaten them. But Jerry Lang calmly pointed out that the lion-hearted Grenville had not faced any such gunnery as these fellows were showing. In twenty minutes the admiral would be in pointblank range and though they feared her not alone, in spite of her size, while she held them in play her mates would crowd around the *Careless* and drag her down like many hounds around a gallant stag. There was nothing for it but to beach the good ship, set her on fire, and take to the woods.

Accordingly, it was done. The *Careless* was driven ashore and presently abandoned after they had loaded themselves with the prime essentials of muskets, powder and shot, and flour and dried meats. After that, they stood in the shelter of the trees which fringed the beech and watched the flames spread. They had left all of her sails rigged, owing to a touch of sentiment, and as a freshening wind filled their bellies, the poor *Careless* seemed to be straining her best to come to the men who had deserted her. Big Tom Bartholomew watched with the tears running openly down his face and Madelin looked up from the lighting of his pipe with astonishment when he marked many a wet eye besides. The flames touched the tarry sails at last and covered them to the top with red fire, but before they were consumed the conflagration in the bowels of the boat reached the magazine and the *Careless* belched up a mass of fire, then toppled into a thousand fragments. The heavy echoes of the explosion had not yet died away when the red face of the sun looked up from the eastern ocean,

while the Spanish small boats lay tossing on the waves, waiting until the lions retired before they closed on the carcass which had been left behind.

"A lucky man is never wrong," said Cunningham. "We might have done what Sir Louis said and scuttled her where she lay. Then we'd have been in a country we knew; now we're like strange dogs in a new town."

So it was that the reputation of Madelin was increased even by a disaster; thereafter he was looked upon as a sort of minor prophet, but this was small comfort to him before the dark of that first night fell on the party. They discovered then what was the difference between living snugly in huts near clean water and with the refuge of a tight ship at hand, contrasted with being benighted in a slimy marsh where it was impossible to find dry ground on which to build a fire or indeed even dry wood with which to kindle it. The rain fell on them constantly and there is nothing which so quickly and utterly saps the vitality of men as to be constantly wet. To be sure, they were used to it at sea, but sea was their element and in this gloomy jungle they were lost.

They spent that night trudging slowly ahead, simply because they could not find a place to lie down that was not a bog. They chewed a bit of dried meat for sustenance, and when the dawn came they paused and drew together for a council. They had been striking inland for twenty-four hours, now, knowing that the Spaniards would beat up and down the coast in great numbers to hunt them down. But though they might be for the moment safe from the Spaniards, they were lost in a trackless wilderness, for they had brought no compass with them. Yet, disgusted as they were with the forest, it only needed a wild new scheme to make them forget their troubles and aim at a star while they were still stumbling in a trap. What the dauntless heart of Jerry Lang suggested was that they head south across the land toward Panama, which must lie in that direc-

tion some twenty leagues away, where they would lie in wait for one of the great treasure trains of mules which must now be moving toward Naruja again. Twenty leagues, when one league meant a day of agonizing effort for the strongest man! But they forgot this. To their wild brains it seemed the treasure was already at hand, and the whole weary party turned south.

To Madelin it was insanity, but he made no effort to escape to the northern coast again partly because he was constantly watched by Billy and partly because he felt it would be as well to die with his countrymen in the jungle as by the tortures of the Spaniards. They came on to better ground at noon, and there dropped down and slept like stunned men. In the dawn they resumed the march after a hearty breakfast. But that breakfast, when ended, revealed that they had not provisions enough to carry them through another day.

They forgot the Spaniards, but the Spaniards had not forgotten them. The third day as they toiled fasting through the forest they were met with a volley of arrows and bullets commingled that set them back on their heels. Then, in the gloom of the trees they made out a breast-work which they stormed with their swords, not sparing time to scatter and try their muskets. The defenders gave them a volley and fled. They took only one prisoner; the rest escaped without loss while on their part two were dead and three slightly wounded. The prisoner was a dogged fellow who refused to talk but the buccaneers found means to persuade him. They tied him to a branch by the thumbs until he begged for mercy. Then they cut him down and he told them that the whole country was roused against them; that three distinct bodies of Spaniards, of whom the party they encountered was the least, were hunting them; that their course had been marked, and that the instructions were to wear them down with many skirmishes rather than to stand to the English in a pitched battle.

After that they had to march in line with scouts around them which increased their labors while at the same time the country was swept clean of game by the Spaniards and Indians who retired before them. Two days of starvation and misery followed. And all this time the rain was never ending. Their clothes rotted to rags. Their shoes became shapeless pulp. Their powder, worst of all, was dampened. In a word, they were forced to confess themselves beaten by weather and famine. To turn back was even worse than to continue, however. They swerved to the north and made a desperate march of twenty hours to shake the Spaniards from their heels if possible. One of the wounded men and a fellow who was coming down with a fever fell behind in that march. They were left behind and never were heard of again. Yet, at the end of it, Madelin found that young Don Hernando was still beside him, white-faced and staggering, but with never a word of complaint.

The next day they came in with a small herd of wares which they slaughtered and made a halt to eat, scarcely waiting for the fire to singe the meat before they devoured it. Then they pressed ahead once more. Two more days followed of misery and starvation. The famine-stricken faces had become terrible to behold. There was no talk. Men saved their breath as though the spending of it were the spending of life. Their shoes were quite gone, now. They wrapped the remnants of their rags about their feet and went hobbling on, leaving bloodstains on the sopping ground they crossed. Three more men, unregarded, fell behind, and the forest swallowed them forever. It was on the second of these grisly days that young Hernando de la Vega began to falter. If he were lost, it meant the loss as well of the ransom which his father had offered, but the privateers had no regard for that. They wanted food, not gold. They gambled day by day a mouthful

of mouldy bread or tainted meat against a pearl of price. There was no one save Madelin to aid the youngster, yet Madelin himself was staggering with weakness. When at last Hernando stumbled, fell, and could only raise himself with his arms, for his trembling legs had turned numb, Sir Louis leaned above him and gasped a cheerful word.

"We shall find luck before night, lad," he assured the little Spaniard. "I feel it in my bones."

Hernando gathered enough strength to sit upright.

"Kind Sir Louis," said he, "you have two pistols. Leave me one and God will bless you. Leave me one, and then farewell. I shall rest here a little, and then follow you."

But Madelin shook his head. He knew well enough for what that pistol bullet was wanted. He gathered the limp hands of the boy over his shoulders, drew him to his feet, and so they staggered on together behind the party.

"Señor, señor!" groaned Don Hernando at his ear. "How will it help me to be the means of your death as well as my own."

"Hush! Hush!" answered Madelin. "It is better to die with a gentleman than to live with rogues!"

He grew hysterical with exhaustion. Darkness spotted with red fires swam before his eyes. He came at the heels of the buccaneers to the foot of a hill.

"I shall die before I am half-way up to the top," said Madelin to himself, and then leaned to the labor.

But before he reached the half-way point, he heard a wild outcry above him. The privateers, as they reached the summit, were throwing up their arms as though they saw heaven before them and then running down the farther side out of sight. Five minutes of despair followed. Then Madelin sank to his knees at the top and laid the senseless body of Hernando on the ground beside him. Below, he saw an Indian village from which

men and women and children were running out to the buccaneers, lifting them from the ground when they fell, pressing food and drink into their mouths, blackened by the bark which they had chewed, and carrying them toward the houses. Two stalwart redskins made toward him. He marked the glistening of their eyes, the lightness of their steps.

How wonderful, thought Sir Louis Madelin, that men could walk without pain! He looked down to his own bleeding feet, and sank into a merciful blackness.

CHAPTER XXI

AMONG THE CIMAROONS

THEY were Maroons or Cimaroons, who having at one time been in subjection to the Spaniards, had finally broken away from them and fled into the mountains and the woods. It was characteristic of many of the Indian tribes that they submitted to every exaction of brutality in treatment, of slavish labor in mines or as beasts of burden, never murmuring. But when they rebelled it was as whole-heartedly as they had formerly been submissive. It was not one or two bold spirits who fled, but a whole village, women, children and men, marched away in the night with as many of their belongings as they could pack upon their backs. From that moment they became the most terrible enemies of the Spaniards, for they had the courage of desperation, knowing very well that if they were finally subdued their penance for revolt would have to be a dreadful one. They were the more dangerous because their long subjection to the yoke of the white man had taught them the habits, the weaknesses and above all the strength of the whites. They knew, for instance, that there was something in the steady valor and in the iron discipline of the Europeans which made them invincible in the open field; so they never stood to them in a regular battle but made their attacks from ambush and in skirmishing for which they had infinite genius. So that it was often said in Darien that though ten Spaniards

might be more than a match for a hundred Maroons in the open field, yet one Maroon who met a Spaniard alone in the forest was very apt to prove the better man. For subsistence they hunted, and maintained a few plantain walks here and there in the woods,—never of any great size because they were apt to be destroyed by the Spaniards when found. They moved their village of rude huts as soon as they had any cause to feel that the Spaniards had located it. And so they led a wandering life, rarely secure, often feeling the pinch of hunger, growing fierce in isolation and becoming more and more expert warriors.

Such was the village upon which the Englishmen had now come. Their approach had been noted, it was learned, while they were still two or three leagues away, and the entire body of warriors from the town had sallied out to attack them as they toiled through the woods. But when the Indians came closer, they discovered by the color of the strangers' skins, by their bearing, and by their speech that they were English and not men of Spain. As a result, they resolved to watch them for a time, and finally their hearts were moved with compassion on the sufferers. For, as the chief told them, when he observed one of their number, though staggering with weakness, pick up a boy and carry him forward, he knew that these were good men. Accordingly, he had hurried to the village toward which the party was moving, and prepared their reception. They remained for many days in that place. A few hatchets, a little powder and ball, amply repaid the Indians for the provisions which they distributed. When they learned that the English were determined to cross the land to the neighborhood of the city of Panama and there ambush a treasure train, they freely offered to accompany them with all their effective fighting strength.

But now the starved bodies were strong again, the

bleeding feet had healed, and the English were once more in spirit. They declined the proffer but accepted half a dozen chosen Maroons to serve them as guides. Then, stocked with all the provisions they could carry, they started forward again. They headed now south and east and gradually climbed the highlands in the center of the peninsula. This was pleasant marching, for they walked under immense trees, the ground at the foot of which was quite free from shrubbery and very clean, for the good reason that the mighty and interlacing boughs of the trees closed tight above them and shut out every ray of the sunlight. So thick and closely compacted was the foliage that even the heaviest rain which crashed down on the treetops reached the ground beneath in soft and gradual dripping, and they walked continually in a green-tinted gloom. They presently climbed a tall hill on the top of which stood a great tree whose head, said the guides, commanded a view of the South Sea. They found it with steps cut into its sides, and climbing to the top they saw, some thirty miles away, the blue mist of the Pacific. It was a joyful occasion to the band of sixty-three men and big Jeremiah Lang was peculiarly affected. He stood straight, lifting his hat while the sun smote his face.

"May God give me strength," said he, "to sail that sea and write my name on it."

A pious ejaculation, but the letters in which he purposed to inscribe it were not of a gentle character!

They reached the Cheapo River and here they made a long halt, for they came upon a body of great cedars formed ideally by nature for the making of periaguas. They felled two monsters, which they shaped with axes and hollowed with fire and axe until they were equipped with one boat of seventy feet in length and another of sixty-eight. They were without sails, of course, but they prepared masts and yards and the means of stepping the masts and making sail as soon as they

should secure canvas or stout cloth. Paddles, rudely shaped except such as the six guides had personally made, were to give them motive power and now, after a five weeks' halt, they prepared to pass down the Cheapo to the coast of the Pacific.

There were, counting the guides, sixty-nine men; Don Hernando made the seventieth person. A strange crew they made as they began to paddle down the stream. So hasty had been their flight from the *Careless* that not three razors had been taken with them, and these had all been lost or spoiled during the journey, when only constant oiling and cleaning could keep the very guns from rust. Every man of the party was bearded and mustached. Some with their keen cutlasses chopped off the beards squarely at the chin, after the fashion of Jerry Lang. But some, following the fashion which Martin Gunn now introduced, trimmed their beards to points, and twirled and shaped their mustaches until they looked like Spanish grandees. Even Billy now appeared with down darkening on lip and chin and the only two smooth-faced people in the party, aside from the Indians, were Hernando and Sir Louis Madelin. It was an odd thing to see the latter scrape his face with a pocket knife of excellent Spanish steel which he had brought to a keen edge. But all men know that a chisel edge is not made for shaving, and poor Sir Louis labored sometimes an hour and a half each day. The result was that he began to look like a boy among these bearded giants. He had lost some caste among them during this long interval, for they could not help noting that the labor of shaving was almost the only work he did during every day. If an axe or a mall were given him, he presently fell adreaming; or he wandered off a few steps the better to examine an odd bird which watched them from a branch; or he fell into conversation with some sweating neighbor, or after all he sat down and brought his axe to a precise edge, though it

was already too keen for the purpose. So they took him from the manual labor and made him a hunter along with Gunn and Billy and the Indians. But even for this purpose he was quite useless. Though he had borne the terrible marches as well as men of thrice his strength, yet the labor of strolling through the woods after game so exhausted him that he was forced to sit down frequently and comfort himself with his long black pipe. Finally they gave up the effort to extort work from him, for as Cunningham said: "It kept two men busy watching him, and there's no use trying to make a king-fisher out of a swallow."

He was allowed to go his own way, which was usually a short distance down the river. There he idled on the banks all the day, drawing, as he said, plans which would be of benefit to them in the construction of the boats, for he was extremely dexterous with his pencils. No plans were either wanted or forthcoming, however, though when Billy spied upon him, it was seen that he was often at work sketching. Finally, for a jest, Gunn and Lang commissioned Billy to steal the papers of the knight, a thing which that light-fingered rogue easily accomplished while Sir Louis slept. When they were spread out, they proved to be a dozen sketches of a girl's head drawn from every conceivable angle, sometimes one profile, then the other; sometimes looking down, and then glancing up; but always it was the same face and always the expression was one of withering scorn and sorrow commingled. They smiled at these at first, but Jerry Lang grew serious before long. He ordered Billy to restore the papers and to keep his tongue silent about what he had seen.

"But," said Gunn, "this is a joke that will keep the lads laughing for another week."

"Not a word of it," answered Lang. "For one thing, you'd have that snaky sword of his between your ribs before you knew it."

“As for that, I can take care of myself.”

“And yet,” broke in Jerry Lang, shaking his head, “if it is this way with him, why did he vote with you and with Solomon for selling her to the Spaniard?”

“Why,” said Martin Gunn, “when you understand him, you know why the wind blows and why it stops. He’s not like the rest of us!”

An opinion in which Lang heartily concurred, but not a word was ever breathed concerning the “plans” of Sir Louis.

The party now dropped down the Cheapo. Advised by their guide, they lay under cover half of one day so that they might pass the town of Cheapo, six leagues from the river’s mouth, by night; and the next morning they were beached in a cove near the end of the stream. From this base they selected from among the six Maroons a clever and brave fellow who offered to go overland to Panama, pass into the city, and linger there until he discovered what were the plans concerning the sending abroad of the next treasure train. However, to send him in in his native wildness and nakedness would simply be to put a rope around his neck. They had to have Spanish clothes for him and all was delayed until he secured them.

The provisions ran out on the third day, but it was not until the fourth that the larger periagua, stealing down the western coast, made a sail which was hugging the shore. They waited for her in the mouth of a creek, darted out when she was opposite, and so made themselves the masters of a beautiful little frigate of nearly a hundred tons, of fast, pleasant lines, new built, and tight as a wine-cask. She mounted four guns but made such wretched play with them that the periagua was unharmed, the ten Spaniards and negroes of the crew were taken without a blow struck, and the prize was wafted into the cove where the party waited. She was practically in ballast, being newly out from new Panama

and bound south for the Chilean coast, but there were much needed provisions aboard her and above all she was well supplied with canvas. The periaguas could now be given wings. In addition, they took the ragged clothes from the back of one of the negroes, put them on the Maroon, and sent the brave fellow in to spy out what he could.

So began days of the most wretched suspense. They had ample provisions, now, for they discovered that by ranging a little inland they came upon broad savannahs over which roamed the active little black cattle which the Spaniards bred there. Yet they were wary of slaughtering them for they could not tell when the explosions of their guns would draw down observance upon them. So, using the greatest precautions, they hunted only for what they absolutely required and waited through the dreary days for word from their spy. In this miserable fashion they passed a fortnight with nothing to busy them except the fitting of the periaguas, which was very soon done. Yet they were not twenty miles from Panama and the fleet Indian could cover that distance in a few hours. They were at the end of their patience when, on the fifteenth day, he returned.

He told them that he had no sooner entered Panama than he had been seized and pressed into service as an oarsman on a galley, that he had remained at sea a week in her, and that on his return he had quickly learned in the town that a great treasure train consisting of three divisions of mules was about to leave from the town and head for Venta Cruz, then on to Naruja. He had actually seen the preparations for the journey under way, then he had made his escape and returned to them. He gave them other news as well. The rumor that they were afoot on the mainland had caused the governor to put an embargo on all treasure shipments across the peninsula until the troops should have hunted

the buccaneers down. The soldiers had finally come in with a report that after being for some time in touch with the pirates and engaging them in one skirmish, the latter had escaped to the north where the Spaniards beat about for them for some time but, getting no word of them, concluded that they had perished to a man in the jungles for which they were ill equipped. After this the governor still waited some weeks, but since all remained quiet, he had finally determined to send off the the great train with all the treasure which had accumulated.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TREASURE TRAIN

HERE was golden news! They made ready in haste. According to the brave Indian who had brought them the tidings, the three *recuas* of mules would leave Panama early on the following morning. To intercept the march of the train it was necessary that they start forward as soon as the night began to gather sufficiently thick to promise them a shelter for their movements. Each man, in the meantime, was bidden look to his weapons, see that the muskets were cleaned and powder and ball prepared in ample quantity, and then in the evening the march began.

It led straight across the savannahs where the going was level enough but where their legs were entangled in the long and wiry grass, growing marvelously thick, and covering the plain. However, as the captains assured the men, the grass which now troubled them would be a blessing before the adventure ended, since it would afford them a secure ambush to make their attack. And now, as ever, they must largely rely upon the effect of a surprise attack if they hoped to have any fortune in the battle. Their informant could not tell them how many would be in the train. The muleteers, Indians and negro slaves need not be counted, for they would probably flee at the first volley, but with such a treasure there would doubtless be a guard of two or three hundred soldiers, or even more, particularly

since the governor was not quite sure that the buccaneers were out of the land.

The whole distance they covered that night was close to twenty-five miles, heading well inland as they traveled so as to fall athwart the road at a considerable distance from Panama. It was half an hour after sun-up when they reached a place where the road, winding through a shallow hollow, swung up a fairly steep rise nearly a quarter of a mile in length. It was the only hill within sight, and around its head they gathered. The sun was almost immediately high enough to find them in the covert among the grass and burn them with the heat. They were forced to sit up, for in the grass the air was stifling with dust. Moreover, waiting as they did in great suspense, the moments seemed heavier and slower than usual.

They expected the train to come in sight by mid-morning. But mid-morning and noon passed and still no dust cloud rose down the road. In the meantime, the water had been exhausted; they had brought no food, expecting to find plenty in the mule-train, and thirst and hunger began to weaken them, while the sun threw every man into a fever. By noon there was open mutiny, three-quarters of the men swearing that they had been made fools of, and that the Indian should be strung up by his thumbs and made to confess the truth. They looked about them for the Maroons, but those subtle fellows had disappeared into the tall grass and were nowhere to be seen!

It now looked shrewdly like a trap. As one of the English sailors from the merchantmen—who had now grown as tough-hearted and callous as the most hardened Brother of the Coast of a dozen years' standing—now put it: "The damned Maroons have made their peace with the Spaniards by selling them the news of where the periaguas are and the ship we've taken. By this time, they have the boats and our mates!"

For five men, and little Don Hernando, had been left behind to guard the cove and watch the prisoners, thus leaving only fifty-eight men to carry through the dangerous enterprise on which they were now embarked. The suggestion of the sailor was reasonable enough for the majority heartily to demand a return march at once, but Peter Solomon told them that they had frightened the Maroons away with their own loud talk, and that the muleteers had probably made a halt in the mid-morning intending to camp through the heat of the day and then push on again at night, since it was the full of the moon and they would have ample light for their journey.

This suggestion arrested their attention; they demanded that a scout be sent. And the invaluable Billy was at once sent away down the road to see what he could see. He came back in a brief hour having, in defiance of heat and dust, run the entire distance. He told them that the camp was hardly more than three miles distant, that it was pitched near a creek, and that the mules, muleteers, and soldiers were all resting through the heat of the sun.

They dared not shout, since an enemy was so near, but they raised a hoarse muttering of content from throats which were cracking with thirst. In the meantime, the Maroons had returned, all six carrying heavy gourds filled with water, which they had carried with much labor from the very creek on which the mule-train was encamped. That swallow of water was nectar to the frying seamen. But now the heat of the sun was nothing. Gold, oceans of it, was near them. They huddled close to Billy and in murmurs questioned him about the soldiers, to which he replied that there was no way to make them out as to numbers except in the vaguest manner, for at the time when he looked they were scattered throughout the train. Upon this some suggested that they attack the train where it lay, but

Martin Gunn very sensibly objected that their approach was sure to be noted and the advantage of a surprise would be thrown away.

Accordingly, they lay where they were until sundown, and at the very moment when the rim of the sun dipped the noise of the bells was heard. Preparations for the attack were instantly made. About thirty men were placed on each side of the road, lying flat in the tall grass with their muskets ready. Peter Solomon was the captain of the day and the plan he contrived was as follows:

The soldiery, according to his experience, generally marched in two divisions, one at the head of the column and one at the rear. If this train consisted of three *recuas* of mules, there would be a considerable distance between the foremost infantry and the troops behind. Accordingly, the buccaneers were to pour in their volley on the leading men in response to the word of Solomon. After this, they were to charge with their cutlasses and try to rout the leading division, which they were the more likely to succeed in because the whole weight of a surprise would be on their side. If they were successful they were not to follow up the advantage at once, but first recharging their weapons, they were to scatter into the grass and receive the rush of the troops from the rear with another withering volley before they came to sword strokes with them.

The noise of the bells now drew momentarily nearer; the brief tropic twilight ended; and the moon turned from a bit of dim silver cloud into a white-shining globe which covered the road with light and illumined the thin tops of the grasses. They heard the steady and regular treading of many men. Then the column came in view marching up the slope of the hill. In the van rode a dozen mounted men armed with calivers and broadswords, with new-polished morions and cuirasses, and with the captain of the party before them. They

came singing a marching song, all in good order, fresh from their rest, and glad of the march into the coolness of the night. They came nearer. Madelin gripped the musket which he leveled and wondered why the command to fire was not given. He drew a bead on one soldier, then another, then another, as they filed past him, four abreast, swinging their muskets.

Then Peter Solomon rose gun in hand, a magnificent figure and easily seen, not only because of the moonshine but also of a white scarf which was tied around his waist.

"In the name of the devil!" cried the captain, reining back his horse, under whose very nose the captain had started up. "What are you?"

"A messenger," said Solomon calmly, "come to send to my master."

And with that he shot the captain fairly through the head. The soldiers who followed that leader had no time to avenge his fall from the saddle. On either side of them cool sharpshooters had each marked his man and now the ground near the road blazed with fire as the volley roared. Not a bullet missed a target of some sort in those crowded ranks. Indeed, more than one heavy leaden slug passed through more than one body before its force was quenched. Whole squads went down as the head of the column was literally blown out of existence. But a hundred and fifty men had marched in that first section of the Spanish army, and one volley from fifty-eight pieces, even though six Maroon arrows sang in the midst of them, could not end that part of the battle. Half of the men were either routed or killed on the spot, but seventy or eighty in the rear, like the hardened veterans they were, formed instantly into two platoons with a front of sixteen men. They sprang into their places, leveling their muskets, as a tough old sergeant bellowed the order:

"Friend or foe! Shoot every man before you!"

While Solomon thundered: "Flat on the ground!" And again, "Down, hearties, down!"

The buccaneers fell flat in the grass; the guns roared almost harmlessly except that three or four horses fell dead and a few more were wounded and rushed blindly away from the confusion. Then the buccaneers came to their feet, each man with a pistol in one hand and a cutlass, an axe, or a grim machete in the other. They gave the Spaniards a blast of pistol bullets in their faces, then fell on with the cold steel. The two platoons were jammed into one mass by that assault. But these were no green infantry. They were well-trying soldiers from the continent with every man his scar. They dropped their useless muskets, snatched out their swords, and lunged into the faces of the seamen. In a trice the fight was hot and wild and the issue doubtful. It remained so for only a moment. Huge Peter Solomon had caught the Captain's horse by the bridle. It was a black charger of fine breeding and immense size, tractable and well-schooled. Solomon himself had been a country lad in England and had lived half his boyhood on a horse. Now he was instantly in the saddle. He slipped the reins over the crook of his left arm. Thus, and with the pressure of his knees, the swaying of his body, he controlled the powerful brute. Both his hands were thus left free to swing a great axe with a bit more than a span across, a hammer face at the reverse of the head, and some ten pounds of good English steel in all. Yet in his grip that ponderous tool was like a gilded toy of wood. He spurred the black monster through the ranks of the sailors, trampling one man under foot. Then he was among the Spaniards and in ten seconds he was dripping to the elbows with human brains and blood. On the one side he struck with the edge; on the other the hammer face descended; and not a stroke was wasted. He shattered men's skulls to pulp or clove them to the chin

after the fashion of knights of old in fairy tales! For only one who had learned the infinite cunning of axe work in the logwood camps along Campeachy Bay could wield that bulky tool with such delicate effect as did Peter Solomon. He was not one minute at his work. It was not in human nature to stand against such a plague of men. The stout Spanish soldiery stood their ground while he delivered a dozen strokes, and then they turned and fled crying that a wizard was fighting against them.

And that was the beginning of a magic night for Peter Solomon. The buccaneers had often said in the presence of Madelin, when he praised Jeremiah Lang, for whom he had a great esteem, that Lang was indeed a terrible fighter and a wise captain, but that Peter Solomon half a dozen times in his life was a man inspired and an incarnate fiend at once. This night was his hour.

When the vanguard melted away and fled down the line he looked after them and saw that the mules, as their custom was when a halt was made, had laid down to ease the burden of their loads. The Indians and negroes, as had been expected, had slipped into the tall grass to wait for quieter times. The ground was covered with Spaniards, some dead, and the wounded swiftly slain by the merciless knives of the Maroons. Two of the buccaneers were dead—at so small a price had that great victory been gained!—and the others were hastily catching up their muskets to load them according to his earlier order. But he saw, too, that the Spanish fugitives were flying down on the men of the rear, spreading the wild tidings as they ran. That rear consisted of a compacted column of perhaps two hundred feet advancing on the right of the mule train. The head of the column had halted as the cluster of the flying Spaniards reached them. The remaining ranks continued their march a few strides and so jammed

the entire mass together. And Solomon, this night, was an inspired general who saw that the proper time had come.

He shook from his arms the red filth which clung to them. Around his head he waved the darkened blade of his axe and shouting, "No muskets! The steel, my hearties! Nothing but the steel!" he led them down on the Spaniards like wolves on sheep.

Sir Louis Madelin had no part in that advance. This work was not to his liking. Here a crowd was elbowing, cursing, stabbing, and there was no room for cleverness of hand or foot. Strength was all that was needed, and strength was not his gift. So he stood on the top of the hill and watched the flying wedge of the buccaneers, whose point and cutting edge was the dreadful figure on the tall black horse, strike the Spanish mass and cleave half-way down the length of the column like a ploughshare running a furrow and overturning all in confusion on either side of its blade. So the Spaniards went down in that first wild rush. They tried to deploy, after that, and use their muskets. But as they brought their guns to the shoulders, sword points were in their throats. And still the point of the ploughshare advanced.

They leveled their guns at that heroic form on the horse, but the muskets shook in their frightened hands and the bullets flew wild. For another breath they stood, and then they cast away their arms and fled for their lives.

"*Dieu le veut!*" murmured Madelin on the hill.

God truly seemed to have had a hand in that massacre for only five Englishmen died in the battle, and the Spaniards lay as thick along the road as crows which have dropped out of heaven on to a field of newly sown wheat. And here was the treasure! There were sixty mules in each of the three *recuas*, and each mule carried three hundred pounds of carefully weighed silver or

gold, though the silver was, of course, by far the greater part of the mass. Drunk with joy, the sailors took the heads of the leading animals and as their bells began to chime, the whole train of mules pitched to its feet and followed patiently through the crackling grasses and on and on across the night and toward the cove where the ships were waiting. Their strength failed. They were beaten on the way, and spurred to life with the cruel points of cutlasses and knives. Some two score of the muleteers had been gathered in after the fight, where they cowered in the grass, and they helped in the work of urging the poor beasts ahead. Early in the morning they reached the cove. By the afternoon their frantic labor had laden the Spanish prize with twenty-seven tons of bullion and they stood out to sea.

But the Maroons were not among them. They were the ravens who stayed behind at the battlefield to gloat over the dead.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ARRIVAL

ALL the bright welcome which had been prepared for Don Francisco at his house was blurred across, for when they reached the place, though a hundred Indians and negro slaves came out to meet them, crowned with flowers, and strewing the road down which they passed with blossoms, Mary Winton and Señor de la Vega had little heed to give them, for they could not help turning their heads and looking toward Nueva Alcantara over which a dozen columns of smoke, black and gray and white, rose side by side, then blended together as they climbed higher until at last the pillar toppled and cast a long arm across the sky, pointing toward the estate of Don Francisco. When he spoke to the girl, she would not look at him.

“Alas, Mary,” he said, “because there are cruel people in every country, am I to be damned for their crimes?”

She seemed to feel the justice of this and now, as the servants and the slaves danced and sang to hail their master and the girl he had brought with him, she smiled back to them and even laughed and waved her hand. They passed down the roadway between palms, and just as Mary began to wonder that one proprietor should have so many human beings in his service, she saw twenty men drawn up at a lofty gateway which opened into a patio with the house stretching around it.

They were attired in a sort of uniform of white cotton cloth with black hats and red feathers stuck in them. They wore long, heavy knives at their hips and carried muskets which, at the approach of Don Francisco, they discharged and then raised a shout. They were half-breeds, most of them—tall, handsome fellows with a reckless bearing, and de la Vega told Mary in a whisper that every man of them would lay down his life for his master. But she could see at once that he was not a master here—he was a king. Through the gate, having dismounted, he led her into a garden full of bloom which was all strange to her, but there were great tropical flowers of blazing scarlet, or of deepest crimson; there were rioting purples, blues and reds; there were golds like inlay of metal leaf over fantastic imagery; there were sweeps of orange which, in the shadow near the walls, seemed the heads of angry flames arising; there were such colors, in short, as Mary had never dreamed of in green England, but all this pagan extravagance was so arranged and subdued by the skill of the gardener that the whole was as pleasant as a well-ordered strain of music. To increase the strangeness of that garden, not a breath of fragrance rose to her as she went down the path, but only the smell of rich earth, newly watered and still drinking.

She who had conceived and executed this beautiful planting now stood before her. It was, Mary knew at once, the mother of Don Francisco, yet what convinced her she could not tell except that the richness of the lady's attire confessed her as the mistress of the house and her age made it impossible that she could be the young master's wife. Yet where her son was tall and wide of shoulder, she was by nature small, and the years had withered her little by little, rounding her shoulders, depressing her chest, stealing the life from her until her skin was a loose parchment. Moreover, Señor de la Vega was a man to be looked at twice even among

princes, so imperially handsome was his face. But whatever of good looks had once been the portion of this lady had long since disappeared. Beauty, having gone, left only a skeleton of strength. There was a long, thin, slightly hooked nose; the mouth was now a stiff line; the fleshless chin thrust out like a continual objection; and from beneath bushing brows of white, stared eyes which had once been lustrous enough to redeem even such a face as this, but they were now utterly cold and dead. And when two cold hands took those of Mary Winton, she felt that she was in the presence of the ashes of a life. To make her more formidably old and lost to all the physical graces, this sad-eyed specter of a woman was dressed in black silk, heavily brocaded with gold and seeded with pearls around the shoulders and the bodice. After an old fashion, a wired collar supported a spray of the finest of French lace which arose around her head, and a deep shower of lace of the same manufacture fell from either sleeve and over her withered, wrinkled hands. She greeted Mary Winton with a smile which brought not a single gleam into her dull old eyes; and then she was taken in the arms of her son. It was not a long embrace, and there were no tears of happiness, though months and many perils had passed between since their last meeting, but it seemed to Mary that each became a little more stiffly haughty in the presence of the other.

This was only a hint of a shadow, however. Mary was taken to a room where a half-breed girl with a sal-low, pretty face waited upon her, showed her the private balcony and the little private garden, closely walled; and at last laid out for her a sumptuous wardrobe where a dozen robes were all ready for her use. Each was fit for an empress, she thought, and far too sumptuous for plain Mary Winton. They had been bought in the town at the command of the messenger whom de la Vega had sent express before them; and, luckily, a

freight of rich goods had recently arrived from Spain, so that there were selections to be made. Señora de la Vega had herself gone to Nueva Alcantara to make the purchases.

It was a type of hospitality which made the girl flush, but she could not present herself in the travel-worn clothes of her journey, so she picked out the simplest of the gowns, and this was a dress of heavy yellow velvet with a square-cut neck. When it was donned, and her hair had been elaborately piled and decorated by the maid, she was changed indeed from the pretty English girl who had ridden into the square of Nueva Alcantara that day. But the wonders were not yet exhausted. For when all was ended of those preparations, the little *mestizo* girl brought out a ponderous box of solid bronze, richly wrought and with a golden "V" and a coat of arms laid in gold upon the lid. When it was opened, there was revealed within a heap of blazing jewels—strings of pearls; medallions of semi-precious stones engraved by masters; and diamonds and sapphires and a few rubies of the true pigeon-blood hue for which all hearts who love beauty are hungered. It was no wonder that Mary recoiled from such a treasure. For if she touched it, she felt that her soul was bought.

"What are these?" she cried to the girl.

And the latter answered: "They are the jewels of the house, señorita. Señora de la Vega commanded that they be placed here. Will you take this to-night?"

And she raised from the box a slender gold chain which supported a single great emerald that would be lovely indeed against the yellow of the velvet.

The dull eyes of the old woman came vividly into the mind of Mary. She could hardly keep from trembling, though she knew not why she was afraid.

"Put everything back," she commanded, "and carry the box to Señora de la Vega at once. Give her

my thanks, but tell her that I am not the mistress of the house."

The maid went, wondering, and she came upon the Señora in close conversation with her son. Don Francisco, when he found the lady of his heart, after so many dangers, after so much effort, lodged safely at last beneath his roof, was half mad with happiness and since there was no one near to share in his ecstasy, he poured it forth upon his mother. For it is the nature of the raptures of lovers that they may not be silent, but if the loved one will not listen, friends must hear in her place. Where could he find, then, a more natural confidante than his mother?

"Is she not beautiful?" he cried to her.

"She is."

"I swear to you," he continued in his rapture, "that it is the lovely soul shining through and not her flesh. For I think she is most charming in sadness, until I see her smile, and I think her most queenly when she smiles until she grows proud. But it is all one: whatever she does, she does with grace. Is it not true?"

"I have hardly seen her, Francisco."

"You could say that of any other, but she is like a flower and at the first breath of the fragrance you know its color even by night."

"It may be so," answered Señora de la Vega, and looking fixedly upon her, he saw that her face was like ice.

He was struck dumb for the moment, and before he could find a thing to say, the *mestizo* girl entered, fearfully, with the jewel casket in her arms—glancing here and there in her fright as though she dreaded lest the very air should steal upon the gems while they were entrusted to her keeping and make them vanish away.

"She has begged me to bring them back to you," said the servant, "and to tell you that she is not the mistress of the house."

"She is very kind," said Señora de la Vega, and took the box with twisted, wiry fingers which, for the moment, became strong to hold that weight. Don Francisco, amazed, lifted the cover of the little chest, convinced himself that he was not dreaming by a glance at the contents, and then waved the girl from the room.

When she was gone, "Señora," he said, addressing his mother, "is it credible that you sent Mary—these ——"

"It is her right," said his mother.

"In what manner?"

"Your wife, Francisco, commands within these walls."

"I gave you the news by a sure messenger. If he has misreported me, I shall wring his throat for him. I have not married her."

Señora de la Vega smiled upon him without mirth and brushed that thought airily away from her.

There was that about her which continually suggested limitless and unexhausted powers in her body and in her mind, no matter how the years may have sapped her appearance of vitality. So it seemed to Don Francisco now. By the gleam in her eye he did not feel that her face was lighted so that he could read her expression more clearly; he only knew that she was reading him, and probing him deep at every glance. Now there recurred to him a wonder he had often felt in his earlier youth—that his father could ever have had the courage actually to marry this grim woman. What could have been in the mind of the elder Francisco de la Vega which urged him to say to this lady: "I love you"?

These were the unfilial reflections which occupied Francisco, the son, as he gazed upon his mother, watching her young and graceful gesture, noting the glimmer in her dead eyes.

"She still plays a pretty little game with you, my dear," said his mother. "I believe, foolish Francisco,

that you think her capable of really refusing to marry a de la Vega?"

"She has done so a thousand times, almost!"

Señora de la Vega was rarely stirred; but now a dull red appeared in her face.

"Is it possible that you have so shamed your name?" she cried. "Tell me the rest—you have been on your knees to her—I doubt it not! Under heaven, Francisco, have you been in the world these years and not learned the first rules of coquetry?"

He had always, before this, looked upon her understanding as a sure and trusty weapon whose point could penetrate to the most obscure matters, but that she could have looked on the open face of Mary Winton without seeing at once her open honesty and goodness shocked him less than it surprised and baffled him. The whole quality of her mind he now doubted, as he saw that he must leave some points unargued. For his mother would never believe that a woman of sanity could honestly wish for a greater thing than to be the wife of a de la Vega.

"Consider what you will about her," he said. "I still can not believe that you have been capable of—laying the family jewels at her feet. As if we bought her! By heaven, that is what she may think of it!"

He stamped in fury and shame, and clasped his face between his hands.

"You forget yourself," said Señora de la Vega, rising. "When you are ready to give me your knee and ask my pardon for this unspeakable scene, you may find me in my room."

A curse came tremblingly near the tip of his tongue. He watched her leave, but at the door she turned again.

"Your brother, Panfilo, dines here to-night," said she, and went on.

Afterward, he begged her pardon in due form, partly because the old habit of obeying her still had

some weight with him, and partly because it would not do to have Mary Winton brought into such an air of discord.

"Only, mother," he pleaded, "try to explain to me why you did such a thing?"

"Because," she answered, "I thought that no matter how mad you might be, when you saw the jewels of the de la Vegas on the person of a—stranger—you might come to your senses. But she knew my point, and she has been wise enough to refuse the gift."

"You make me the prize in a spiteful game! But I shall say no more now. Tell me of my dear Panfilo! Under heaven, there is only one thing that could please me more than to find him in Nueva Alcantara. But what does he do here? What has brought the gay rascal from Italy?"

"You have displeased me, Francisco," she said. "I shall talk with you no more. You may ask Panfilo your questions when you see him."

He thought that a faint smile touched her lips; but he made sure that it was only the play of shadows. For he could hardly remember a smile upon that face. It was plain, after this, that his mother would use all her power to oppose the match, but he pushed that thought behind him and went to Mary Winton, for the dinner hour was now not far away. He found her made enchanting in that rich yellow velvet, for the faint glow of it fell on her bared throat and upon her arms. She was in the little garden upon which her balcony opened, sitting while the shadows fell thicker every moment, drowning the reds with purple, smoothing wild orange and sharpest yellow to a single tone. She came hastily to him, with a smile that made him bless himself and swear that the end was almost come. She had been desperately homesick, she told him, so he sat down with her and first of all explained the jewel box, by telling her that his mother was a rarely impulsive woman—a

statement which he could see did not jibe with the girl's opinion of the señora. Then he hurried on to pleasanter themes, and particularly to Panfilo. For of his three brothers—there were no sisters in his family—death in battle had taken two, but by the rarest fortune his favorite among them all was spared, and that was Panfilo.

Never had he talked so eloquently as now, when he described the jollity, the inexhaustible good nature of Panfilo, his truth and generosity which kept him bankrupt, and his laughing prodigality which made all the world love him much and despise him a little. For, as Don Francisco chatted, Mary Winton drew a little closer to him, and laid her hand upon his arm and smiled straight into his eyes. It might be simply because she was very lonely and because to have Francisco near her warmed her heart. It might be something more. The brain of the Spaniard spun with it.

They were called to dinner, which was always a night meal, because of the heat of the midday.

"But," said Mary Winton, "Panfilo has not come?"

"If he is late, we will not wait. Meals wait for no man in the house of my mother. Not even my father could have a course recalled if he came in too late for it!"

They laughed a little at this, but he could see her stiffen a little as they went to meet his mother again. They found her in a much better humor, apparently. She entertained them for a moment with a little tragedy of how she had planted a choice species of climbing scarlet roses—"the size of a florin, and thick on the bush as grapes in a cluster"—and how a terrible blight, when the plants had grown and prospered, had attacked the vines at their roots. Otherwise, she said, she would have had the whole face of the house blushing with flowers to greet Mary Winton when she arrived. At this, poor Mary grew redder than any blossom, and

they went into the dining-hall with Don Francisco smiling upon and pitying her.

Panfilo did not come, but the se ora maintained the burden of the talk and Mary for courtesy's sake did her best to rally a little. But it was a gloomy hall of great length and imposing height, so that the clustering candles threw a light which only hinted at the brawny rafters which arched far above them; and upon the walls where the weapons were crossed beneath gay flags, sometimes the head of a halberd glistened, sometimes a spear-head took a high-light. Fifty could have dined here, and around the three the space was filled by the whispering feet of the servants and by ghosts.

CHAPTER XXIV

PANFILO

SILENCE, in spite of all their efforts, came at length over the big room, and looking up because that quiet compelled her, the girl was aware in the black arch of the doorway of a thin, white, handsome face which seemed to float there, unsupported by a body, and of burning eyes fixed intently upon her. It was a young face, but with the shaven crown of a monk, and now she made out that he was clad in black which had melted into the shadows. Don Francisco followed her glance in alarm, then started from his place with a cry of joy and wonder:

“Panfilo!”

And he rushed into the arms of his brother.

He led Panfilo to the table with an arm around the thin shoulders of the latter, babbling questions in a childish fashion. Why was this monkish garb? And this shaven head? Was it another mad prank, or had Panfilo indeed, heaven forbid, taken orders? And he was thin. Had some cursed Italian fever struck him? Moreover, what had brought Panfilo the gay from Italy? However, blessed be the cause, whatever it was, that had drawn his dear brother to the Indies!

To all of this Panfilo listened with a face quite expressionless, until at length there was a sufficient pause for him to answer:

“God called me, and I answered. That is all, Francisco.”

The arm of Don Francisco fell from those thin shoulders. He drew back a little, and surveying Panfilo anew from a little distance, he became both grave and sad, as though he were now seeing his brother clearly for the first time. But he shook his head, at length.

"After all," he vowed, "when I get to the bottom of this matter, I'll find there's a woman in it!"

Panfilo spoke again, and Mary wondered to hear from so spare a frame a voice so softly resonant, so deep in music. If it were raised, it would fill to the farthest recesses all the gloom of a gray cathedral, as if with light.

"There is no woman in my life from henceforth, my brother," said he, "saving only the sweet mother of our Lord!"

Whereby Don Francisco was struck dumb. He watched with tears of wonder in his eyes and a frown of anger on his brow while Panfilo, taking a place at the table, raised a finger, and there was instantly brought to him bread and a goblet filled only with clearest water. Even this scanty provision he hardly touched, but seemed to be feeding in deep and distant thoughts. Yet when Francisco, at last, begged him to relate what had changed him, he told the story frankly, and in moving words: of how he had been ill in Italy, and how the doctors had despaired of his life, and how he had fallen into a trance—or perhaps it was death, for three doctors who watched beside him drew the sheet over his face and called him a corpse—but now as he lay there with his body cold and his eyes dark, it seemed to him that his soul rose from the flesh and was above it; that he looked down on his own covered body and saw the doctors stealing forth and closing the door softly behind them, like thieves fleeing; that the winged soul flew upward and passed the clustered stars; that he came into a great void of deepest sea-blue where grew up a sound of music, then a light, then a great

form dimly seen as if behind a mist. Then a voice which said: "Oh, my son, I touched clay and bade it live and be a man. Behold what manner of man was it that wasted the treasure of the soul I poured into it? But though sin is infinite, mercy is more infinite, for mercy is I and the beginning and the ending of all things. Return therefore, soul, to the dead flesh of Panfilo. The corruption shall flee from the body; the heart shall beat; and from the eyes a mist shall be purged so that Panfilo, awakening, shall see the truth."

Even so, when he wakened, his eyes were cleared and he saw that he had been living in damnation. Therefore he had given this new life to the cause of God. And now he was there in Nueva Alcantara.

"But in what character?" asked Francisco.

"In the character of chief inquisitor," said the brother slowly, and again those steadfast eyes rested on the face of the girl. "The foul weed of heresy corrupts many gardens, many lovely gardens, and it works apace. But, by the blessing of heaven, a sword of fire is in my hands which shall kill it at the root—at the root!"

He uttered the last words in a sort of ecstasy, throwing back his head to look upward as though the very presence at that moment leaned above him, and clutching at his breast with his starved fingers until the black gown parted and Mary saw, or thought she saw, a fabric like the roughest sackcloth fitted closely to his body.

There was little speech after that. The meal ended in some manner, and, Panfilo asking to speak with his mother apart, Francisco and Mary hurried from the room.

"It is all I feared and more," said the mother to her younger son. "She has been sent as a plague for all the sins of our family. The heretic has bewitched Francisco. His heart is in his eyes whenever he looks on her! What is to be done?"

"She is young," said Panfilo, thoughtfully.

"She is very old in cunning. Trust the eyes of one woman to read another."

"Trust not yourself, mother," said the monk. "For by confidence the devil sets his mark on man. As for this girl,—as for this Mary Winton,—she is young, as I said, and if she lives and breathes and reeks with error, it is to be remembered that she was raised by teachers of heresy."

"Dear Panfilo," said the mother coldly, "you are filled with the very warmth and milk of human kindness. How many, child—how many were this day given over to the secular arm?"

The thoughtfulness left his eyes and they were filled with light. A goblet of heavy silver chased with delicate arabesques in gold stood near him and this he clasped in his pale hands, as though its nobly modeled beauty expressed the fulness of his joy. He smiled, and the smile removing the lines and the writing of long pain, starvation and bitter penance, the face became young and beautiful as that of an angel.

"Twelve souls," said he, "twelve lost and damned beings, spreading their inner damnation abroad to all who came near their presence, were this day removed from earth and sent through fire to the everlasting flames below."

The old woman moistened her white lips, staring upon him.

"It is an act of much grace," she said at length.

But the light had already faded, and the thought had returned to the worn brow of the ascetic.

"Touching this girl, this heretic ——" began the mother.

"She is young," said the son again.

He had dropped his chin upon his palm and his arm, weakened by a recent fast, trembled under the weight. So, looking down, he did not mark the shadow of anger which crossed the face of Señora de la Vega.

"A young and new pestilence," she said, "kills as many as an old and tried one."

"Hush," said the inquisitor. "Only those who are chosen may handle flame, or speak of it."

"In one word," she said, with growing earnestness, "Francisco is face to face with destruction! This pretty face will undo him; he rushes downhill to damnation!"

"Ah?" said the monk. "Is she beautiful, also?"

"Beautiful? Bah! There is no true beauty in these pale, pretty Englishwomen. You saw her for yourself."

At this, he looked into the distance, raising up all that he could remember of her, but he could not succeed as far as he wished and now shook his head.

"I recall only the eyes," he said. "And they seemed to me—"

His voice died away while she could see the thought completed in silence to himself. And now a sudden fear seemed to strike her so that she looked upon Panfilo as though he had become a horror.

"Well, then," she muttered, "what of the eyes, dear son?"

She had to repeat it, so lost was he in his thoughts.

"Of what, then, did her eyes make you think?"

The deep voice answered slowly, making music of each word: "Of the blessed Virgin whose name she bears."

The mother shrank in her place and her great dull eyes grew small.

"Who shall say," continued the dreamer, only half aloud, "that the sacred name of itself had not power to mold her soul in grace and in beauty unaware?"

"Panfilo! She has lived her life by the teachings of the cursed church of England which denied the Holy Father. Every day, blasphemy has crossed her lips and tainted them."

He raised that wan hand through which the candle

light seemed to penetrate and shine and turned all the shadows of it to rose.

"Speech is a form and words are vanity but only the spirit with which they are filled is from our Father which art in Heaven."

"Hallowed be His name!" gasped the crone, choking with malice. "But, Panfilo! Panfilo! Look again! Let your eyes be clear. The safety of our house depends on it. For only the hand of the Holy Office can remove her from ——"

At this he started, and a color which had begun to rise in his face receded and left him with the mortal pallor which was usually his.

"God forbid," said he in a troubled voice, "that I should speak as though truth lived always in my mind. I am fallible, most fallible, and the fiend comes upon us in diverse ways."

He started up from his chair, hesitated as though a question were upon his lips, and then rushed from the room, leaving his mother shuddering in her chair.

"Panfilo also!" she whispered at last, and made a little gesture with her fingers crooked as though she would have caught at the hilt of a great old-fashioned broadsword hanging upon the wall opposite her, a weapon which had carved steel armor in its day.

But, in the meantime, Francisco was seated beside the girl in the great patio where the moon had turned the stars pale in the blue-black heavens and changed all the scentless flowers of that garden to dim ghosts.

"Let heaven be praised," said he, whispering the words as though he feared lest the very earth might register them against him, "let heaven be praised that, since this holy plague was destined to come upon Nueva Alcantara, fortune should have sent my brother to fill the Holy Office, and you, dear Mary, are safe!"

CHAPTER XXV

MARY WINTON, A PRISONER

SEÑORA DE LA VEGA could not sleep that night. In the morning for her breakfast, she barely touched a dish of avocado pears mixed with sugar and lime juice and beaten smooth and light. For the instant she tasted its peculiar acid-sweet, her eyes were opened and she knew that it was her duty to pass to the limit of murder itself if that were necessary to save her eldest child from the ruin of an heretical marriage. But there was another great weapon which she must attempt to use before she passed to the final effort.

She went to Nueva Alcantara in her carriage with four Indian runners in front of the equipage and four in the rear. A gigantic negro coachman sat in the driver's place and two more in livery sat behind her. Such was the estate in which she arrived at the town and went straightway to her son. He lived in the jail itself that he might be nearer to those wretches who were undergoing inquisition there, and when she demanded to be led to his chamber, she was conducted at once down winding steps through several doors and into a region of damp and dark where a sweat of unhealthy moisture stood upon the rock walls in which the chambers had been carved. She had heard that her son lived more like a man condemned to death than one in freedom and possessed of the greatest powers, but the reality staggered her imagination. She was brought into

what her guide termed the antechamber of the Holy Office, the furniture of which consisted of two long stone benches, one upon either side of the apartment. An inner door presently opened and Panfilo came in to her with a wild and bloodshot eye and a fumbling step of weakness. He dropped on to a bench, rested his head and shoulders against the dank wall, and so looked up to her.

"Panfilo," she said to him in a horror, "you have not closed your eyes since I last saw you."

"Every hour of sleep," said the enthusiast hoarsely, "is time lost forever which might have been spent in the golden pains of penance."

She shaded her eyes so that the dull light of the single iron lantern which illumined that dungeon might not shine against them.

"My son," she said, "I read your mind."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Panfilo, but added hastily: "The work of my day is already about to begin. I have not many moments for you, mother."

"I have come to tell you," said the old woman, "that last night I was troubled for the sake of Francisco only, but that this morning I know the heretic girl must be removed because of both my sons."

"Still upon her?" cried Panfilo, frowning.

"As your mind has been all this night," answered Señora de la Vega. "Come! You can not deceive me. The subtle devil who lives in her body has possessed you, Panfilo. I saw it come upon you like the beginning of a fever in my house last night."

Panfilo crossed himself with a trembling hand.

"Prayer," he said, "has been of no avail to me."

"To be sure," answered the mother. "She has unnerved you with her witchcraft!"

"Hush!"

"But was there not something strange in her, Panfilo? Did she not differ from all women you have ever

beheld? The fiend is in her, and when she looked on you, it was the touch of his hand which you felt!"

As she uttered these words, she saw him wince and shrink again; so that she knew a little time for reflection was all that was needed in order to make her hint sink deep and breed an infection of doubt in his mind. Therefore, with this she left him and went back to the house feeling that she had removed the first and greatest obstacle from her path. There remained other things to be accomplished before her work was fairly under way but she now felt a cheerful sense of surety. When she returned to her house what she first did was to take Mary Winton for a walk through the garden, and then in the orchard along the pleasant irrigation canal, where the water-lilies floated thickest with broad green leaves and deep yellow blossoms. For she felt that the first thing to do was to disarm the enemy so that the blow might fall most surely. She talked of how the elder Francisco de la Vega had come to this land a poor man with only an honorable name, but how he had made a place for himself with his wits and with his sword; of how he had sent for her from Spain; of how she had come and married him; of how they had planned and built this house; and before the end, Mary was quite fascinated and found it possible to smile upon the withered face of Señora de la Vega.

Yet a strong foreboding which had begun in her the night before with the coming of the white-faced inquisitor still persisted and that afternoon she told Don Francisco frankly that to keep her longer would be useless, for her mind was made up. For though she freely forgave him for taking her against her will to his home, she saw now that so great a distance lay between the ways of the English and the ways of Spain that she could never be happy as his wife. To this Francisco listened with a drawn and wretched face.

"It is what you saw in the square at Nueva Alcantara yesterday, is it not?" he asked her.

“Perhaps that is part,” she told him. “But the chief of all, Francisco, is that I can see a great friend in you, but never a lover.”

He mused upon this sentence miserably for a time, but finally he begged her to give him ten days more, so that the strangeness of the place might wear away a little and then she might think more kindly both of it and of him. There was nothing for her but to accept. So began a strange week of a happy-sadness. For on the one hand Don Francisco was throwing all of his might into the effort to win her and to hold her, never wearying in his attentions, until sometimes she wondered at herself for holding out against him; and sometimes, again, she felt that out of pity she must give way. On the other hand, Señora de la Vega had grown wonderfully cordial. She unlocked a store of anecdote which had to do with old Spain and her girlhood, more especially of a grim old warrior, her father, who had sailed with the great Armada in a ship of six hundred tons in whose immense timbers the shot of the English struck and lodged but could penetrate no more than if the vessel had been built of steel. As for Panfilo, he came to the house no more. Francisco rode thrice along the league of dusty road into the town but his brother always pleaded important duties and refused to see him.

Then came an ever memorable evening on the eighth day after her arrival. It was a warm dark night and she had left her room on account of the heat to sit for a time in the little garden by her balcony and to watch the mingling host of stars in the sky, and how the wind stirred the heads of the climbing vines where they topped the walls. She had risen to go back to her bed when iron creaked upon iron and the outer door to the garden opened softly; a woman stood before her; and a woman's voice was whispering in English—oh, sweet and welcome speech to the ear of Mary!—“Mary Winton, in the name of God, have pity on a poor hunted wretch!”

“What are you?” asked Mary in the same guarded voice, drawing back a little toward the balcony. “Why do you come to me?”

She wondered at herself that she felt so little fear, but perhaps it was the dear sound of the English language which removed all terror. The fugitive ran to her and dropped on the ground at her feet.

“The devilish Inquisition is hunting me!” she murmured. “Lady, by the dear land that mothered us both, give me the means to fly from them.”

“Hush!” whispered Mary, sheltering the head of the woman and looking wildly about her. “They say that the spies of those human fiends are everywhere. But alas, my poor sister, how can I help you? What is my power?”

“I am penniless,” sobbed the other. “The priest has taken my last money. Now that I have no more, he has betrayed me to the Inquisition and to-morrow they come to take me. With only a little money I could buy a horse and ride for the mountains. God would shield me—God would shield me!”

“If there is mercy in Heaven,” whispered Mary Winton, “may it fall on you. Wait for me here!”

She hurried into her chamber, took up the purse which Don Francisco had insisted on giving her, and ran out to the other again. Into her cupped hands she poured a flood of gold and silver. But faster than the money fell, the blessings of the poor creature rained upon the ears of Mary. And, cowering there in the darkness, the one listened and the other told a bitter story. Her name was Julia. She had sailed for Jamaica three years before, been captured by the Spaniards, taken to the mainland, carried across the peninsula to Panama, and thence brought south to Nueva Alcantara. There, because she would not lie to them about her faith, she had passed through a hideous torture in the Inquisition. For ten months she lay in

their moldering dungeons. Then she was brought to the torture. Strings were tied around her thumbs until the blood spurted forth from under her finger-nails. She was suspended by her arms, with a great weight on her feet which drew her almost limb from limb, and this agony finally broke her spirit. She "confessed," and was given a heavy penance after three months in bed had healed the wounds of the tortures. But the marks were still upon her, and lifting her sleeves, she showed the broad white circles where the ropes had bit through her flesh to the bone.

Mary grew sick at heart while she listened, and tears flowed fast down her face as she followed poor Julia to the gate.

"God will punish them and save you!" Julia said, and hurried off into the night.

The next day, she told Don Francisco all that had happened, and he turned upon her a white face.

"You have given aid and harbor to a confessed heretic and impenitent," he said. "Alas, Mary, you have taken fire in your hands. Even by telling me, you have placed me, also, in peril of my life. Only pray heaven that she be honest!"

"Honest?" cried Mary. "I saw the scars in her flesh—a horror past belief!"

He passed a hand slowly across his face, grinding his stiffened fingers into the flesh as though he strove to rub away something that would not out. It was an unforgettable gesture, but what he said was: "All may yet be well!"

They went for a ride that afternoon, as if they were fleeing from a shadow in his house, and as they rode he pressed his suit upon her as he had never done before.

"Francisco," she said at last, very gently, "if I loved you more than any woman ever loved a man, I could only marry you by giving up my church and passing into yours."

"What is a church," he asked, sweating with anxiety, "except a form of words and actions? You may reserve a thousand thoughts in your heart of hearts and who could know?"

She looked to him with one of those faint, sad smiles which he had seen in her face more than once before and, as always, it made her seem infinitely dear to him, and infinitely far away. "It would be a living lie."

He remained for some time in thought with so much pain in his eyes and in his compressed lips that she wanted to stretch out her hand and comfort him, but she knew that if she stirred he would instantly have her in his arms.

"You have resolved on this?" he said at length.

"I have," she answered.

"Then—to-morrow I shall bid you farewell. There is a great ship fitting in the harbor now. It sails south through the Straits of Magellan to-morrow and then away to Spain where you can easily find a ship for England. I shall make all arrangements; I know the captain and the owners. All shall be made pleasant for you. And now—all this thing that has been between us is forgotten, Mary. We are only friends, and I have never tried to be anything more to you. Yet—yet—God knows my heart fails me when I remember how few hours pass before I see you for the last time!"

But, as they slowly rode back to the house, he conversed of other things, pleasantly; and her soul ached because she saw the pain of the effort which he was making. They came home again in the rose of the evening with the white walls of Alcantara in the distance growing blue with the night mist and all the road turning to red gold by the light of the dying sun. In the patio they met Señora de la Vega working in the cool of the day in a great apron, with a trowel in her hand, caring for some of her splendid favorites. She turned to greet them, and it seemed to Mary Winton

that the face of the old woman wrinkled with an indescribable heat of malice as they passed.

"Francisco," she called. "Stay here with me a moment. I have something to tell you."

Don Francisco turned back and Mary went into the house alone, through the hall, and there she felt, rather than saw, a stir among the shadows behind her. She turned sharply around and saw two tall men wrapped in black robes with black cowls fitted over their faces, so that the eyes were almost lost to view. They stood before her with their glances on the floor and their hands thrust into the opposite sleeves of their garment.

"Are you," said one, "the woman, Mary Winton?"

"I am she," she made answer.

"We have come for you."

Here a wild cry rose in the garden as though from a man who has felt cold steel slide suddenly into his flesh. Footfalls sounded, and Don Francisco broke into the hallway with his face convulsed. She ran to him, and he caught her in protecting arms.

"They have come to take me and to kill me—I know it!" she gasped at his ear. "Francisco, you have brought me to this. In the name of honor and mercy, keep them from me!"

"I shall," said Don Francisco. "I shall die ten thousand times before you are touched. Peace, dear heart—poor frightened bird!"

"Rash man," said a solemn voice from one of the two dark figures, "it will not be ten thousand deaths if you resist us, but one death through ten thousand eternities. Release the woman to our hands!"

She felt a great shudder pass through the body of Francisco. Then she was drawn backward by the arms and he did not lift a hand to keep her. The last she saw of him was a pale and anguished face, then she was carried away by the two.

CHAPTER XXVI

MUTINY AND CAPTURE

ALL went merry as a feast of plenty on the southern voyage of the buccaneers; they scuttled one of the periaguas the first day out when she began to show signs of being a dull sailer, but the other craft, due to a subtle difference in lines, lived like a fish in the sea and they carried her with them together with the hundred-ton prize which they had so fortunately captured. There were fifty-eight English, now, all told, of whom twenty-seven remained out of the crew with which Captain Sunday had made ready to depart from Antwerp; the thirty-one remaining consisted of the Brothers of the Coast and the merchantmen who had been added since the cruise began. Fifteen English and five of the prisoners, who were now compelled to labor with the sweeps and do other disagreeable work aboard ship, manned the periaguas; forty-three English and fifteen prisoners worked the treasure ship.

The division had been to every man's satisfaction. To each of the four captains went two and a half shares. To the rest, including Sir Louis Madelin, had been offered single shares. But these single shares amounted to about four thousand pounds sterling, while each of the four leaders received no less than ten thousand pounds. In a word, considering what a pound could buy in those gay days, every one of the adventurers could go back to England and retire to a life of leisure. There was small chance of that, however. How much

of the loot would be squandered on liquor and trinkets in Port Royal no man could guess. Not more than one or two in the entire lot, perhaps, would have sense enough to invest his plunder. For, having taken it so easily, money was now mere dirt. The soul of the poorest swabber aboard the ship was now as great as the mind of any captain. They built in the forecastle schemes which would have startled their captains in the cabin. They planned small armies which should loot New Spain and drain Chile dry of wealth. There was only one trouble and that was the superfluities of incipient captains, for each now felt that he could lead. Among them all were only two cool heads. The one was Billy's, who watched and listened and swallowed his smiles as they talked. The other was that dry, lean cavalier of the coast, Cunningham, who had startled one of these little congresses which was mortgaging the future, by saying in a rumbling voice: "You lads have been in some tight places. There was the taking of the *Madre de Dios*. One man helped you there—it was Madelin. You had your backs to the wall in Naruja. Madelin saved your skins again. Then luck came and helped you when you were dying in the damned marshes. At last you drove away at the treasure train, and if Solomon hadn't turned himself into a thousand devils, we'd have taken more bloody heads than dollars. But now that you've dodged the devil four times, you think that you're his master!"

Such an oration could silence them for the time being, but it could not long influence them. They returned to their dreams, and when they had nothing else to think of, they speculated on the strange mind of Sir Louis Madelin. As has been related, he had lost much in their eyes owing to his laziness when the periaguas were building, and he had lost vastly more when, during the attack on the treasure train, he held back and did not stir a hand on their behalf. But when the

division of the spoil was made, he astonished them all even more than he had done on that bloody and doubtful day when he checked the assault of Señor de la Vega and quelled that killer of men. For, when his heap of the gold and the silver was offered to him, he told them quietly that he was with them partly because he could not help it and partly because he enjoyed the adventure, but that not five minutes of his time could be bought with all the treasures in the Indies if he did not so choose. And on this occasion, he did not choose.

So he put away that share without taking a penny-weight and when they asked him what he wished to do with it, he said that they might give it to the devil, if they chose, or to the widows of those who had already fallen. With this sobering remark, he lighted his pipe and went off to lean at the rail and watch the lazy fin of a shark cutting the slaty waters under the quarter of the ship. This was beyond understanding, and from that moment, he was never out of their minds. In their eyes, he had become by a single stroke a man both mysterious and great. He was quickly aware of this and very proud of it because, as he was acting various parts all his life, he would often throw himself into a rôle with such violence that he sometimes forgot he was not on a stage. How beautifully convenient was such a nature which could be enthralled by the perfection of its own rascality on one day and be equally delighted on the next by the true and golden ring of its nobility! But there is nothing which so tickles the vanity of a man as to be wrapped in a mist which the understanding of others can not penetrate. And by refusing the thousands of pounds which might have been his, he secured exquisite enjoyment to the value of a far greater sum.

It was a wild voyage, that journey to the south. They were hardly well under way before they bore down on a fine and stately vessel bound for New Panama and

loaded heavily with strong Spanish wines, with livestock such as pigs, chickens, goats, and everything, in short, which would thrive on the decks of a ship through a long voyage. She had cases of sweetmeats aboard, also, and a thousand little confections meant for the tables of the gentry in Panama. How the buccaneers roared as their large throats swallowed these dainties! They were never sober, now. They burst the laws of Captain Sunday to a thousand shreds, and when Peter Solomon, fresh from that glorious day where he had smitten the soldiers in the savannahs, attempted to punish a fellow who refused to go aloft on one bright day, a dozen of the other sailors crowded about and threatened to make an end of Solomon if he so much as laid a hand on the man. Peter Solomon was as brave as he was powerful, but he had the courage of action rather than that of deliberation. This was an emergency fitted rather to the talents of his great rival, Jeremiah Lang. He fetched Lang to his assistance, and after Jerry, came little Martin Gunn, smiling and taking snuff, and scorning the sailors as much as they hated him. Last of all, the fourth captain, who was Tom Bartholomew, reeled in the rear, very drunk. The sailors laughed at him in one breath and cheered him with the next. The four did their best. They made speeches to the men, told them that the whole success of the voyage had been based upon the strict adherence to the customs of their dead Captain Sunday. They vowed that when the old customs were given up, there was yet time for the voyage to be ruined. In the meantime, they sat as a council of four to take Sunday's place.

"But four times the four of you," said Cunningham, above the crowd, "would never make one Captain Sunday!"

It was the blow in the face which called for sudden action, but there was nothing the captains could do, ex-

cept to stand by and listen to the sullen but deep applause with which they heard Cunningham's remark. Now they spoke up in phrases, here and there about the deck. They were tired of living like dogs on a man-of-war. What they wanted was to live as other buccaneers lived on other ships, working the ship when she was in a storm, fighting her when she was in danger—but not this continual round of washing down the decks, standing watches, polishing brass and metal work all day, working foolishly to repair rigging which was not needed for the immediate sailing of the ship. They shouted with one voice for an easy life.

The four captains stood back at this and looked on one another hunting for proper words, but gradually seeing that there were no words to fit the case. They were grim men, those four, but they had some four dozen fellows against them on the ship and they knew that the game was up. Here a voice spoke from the poop above and behind them.

"An easy life, and that means quick and easy dying!"

They looked around and up, for though they recognized the voice, they could not believe that even Madelin would have the audacity to cheek and scoff at this crew of cutthroats and random villains. That the crew was ready to pitch their captains and all other opponents into the sea, appropriate their shares, and make on for home or Port Royal was very apparent. But when they looked around, there was Sir Louis Madelin indeed, sitting on a cabin stool which he had brought out to take the evening breeze, and smoking quietly at his pipe. The crew snarled, and showed their teeth at this insolent scamp. But this threat seemed to make him more audaciously impertinent than ever. He stood up and leaned at the rail, looking down upon the waist and sneering in their faces.

"There is my wise friend, Mr. Cunningham," said

Madelin. "He has an excellent and natural talent for making trouble. I have seen him buzzing about and raising this for some days."

"You lie!" shouted Cunningham, and he started to rush across the deck.

"Ah!" said Sir Louis, "does the dog bark back at me? Come hither, my friend, and I shall teach you to know your master. Come hither, Cunningham, for I have a very great need of exercise ——"

But Cunningham was caught at and held by a dozen thick arms.

"No fighting," they said, "till we have to fight!"

That seemed to be their watchword, as though the considerate among them realized that, though they could master their captains, the fight would cost them a hideous loss of their best fighting men. Besides, they needed Tom Bartholomew to sail the ship, for he was a rare navigator when he was not drunk.

Others added: "That cock on the poop—we'll stop his crowing later on."

"Come, come!" said Madelin, still leaning an elbow on the rail and puffing his pipe between the words. "Make an end to your captains. Then chop off your heads and jump into the sea after them. That will be a game for the Spaniards. I tell you, lads, there'll be a fishery for bones and treasure off this coast before the year's out!"

They weighed his insolence for a fraction of a second with many black hands beginning to knot around the hilts of cutlasses. Then Billy, from a corner of the waist, laughed, and that gave the whole a keynote of amusement. They gave Sir Louis a cheer. They told one another that that reckless devil was worth all the four commanders rolled together. The whole affair was now given a good-humored turn and they swore to the commanders that they wanted to keep their leaders all in place and that they would obey them implicitly when

the time came for action—storm or battle or famine. But at other times, they would be their own masters and bestow their time where they saw fit. The four commanders swallowed the bitter medicine because they had to. Afterward Martin came aft and thanked Sir Louis with a set speech, but Madelin waved away what he had done.

“Thank Billy,” he said. “Billy started the laughter!”

He himself went to find Billy later on, but he found the youngster in the center of a gang of roaring pirates who were trying to force him to drink a bowl of punch.

“I’ll see you all damned first,” said Billy heartily. “I’ll drink with every man-jack of you on shore, but afloat, I’ll keep my head and my hands my own.”

Some one made a pass to catch him by the scruff of the neck and Billy, knowing that his own half-formed strength was no match for the hardened power of these giants, slipped through their midst with the flexibility of a snake and presently flashed up the rigging of the mast with the most dexterous of the sailors after him. He ran out to the end of the gaff and from the very point of it, hung by one hand like a monkey, laughing and thumbing his nose at his pursuers. Madelin thought it the maddest exploit he had ever looked upon in his life, for the ship was cuffling along through a choppy sea which jerked the mast-head back and forth and, in addition, the gaff-end itself had a whiplike, snapping play of its own. So that the gaff trembled and shook and snapped at Billy like a living thing striving to shake him off.

The pursuers hesitated a moment in amazement at this wild daring. Then they clambered out on the spar, threatening to keelhaul him for giving them so much trouble and so hot a chase. But, just as their brawny hands were reaching for him, he loosed his grip and, with the inward sway of the ship impelling him and

with a final fling of his own body, he shot through the air, caught a forestay, spun around it three or four times before impetus was dulled, and then slid down to the bowsprit on the end of which he took his seat and promised any man on the ship who dared to come out to him a span of knife blade in his throat and a quick burial in deep blue water.

No one went out to test him. For they all agreed that Billy was of a queer make, whether for man or for boy. This exploit of Billy put every one in the highest good humor, but it did not lessen the fact that there had been a mutiny. From that day forth, there was nothing but drunkenness and idleness aboard the ship. The winds hung steadily in the north; they made good progress, logging steadily on their course, but as gloomy Peter Solomon often said: "If they sighted the Lima galleon itself, they could not have made an attempt at her. For two-thirds of the crew were always drunk."

They even debated as to whether or not it was worth their while, loaded with treasure as they were, to stop in at Nueva Alcantara and restore the boy and claim the ransom, but half a dozen had already gambled away almost all of their shares and they were so hot for making the venture at the town that the rest could not resist. Moreover, Sir Louis Madelin often spoke among them, and pushed the point for the boy. He did this while he was dicing with them. For, proud as he was—and much too proud to accept a share of their loot!—this singular gentleman found it quite accorded with his honor to shake dice and roll them on the deck of the ship. And he won with such amazing steadiness—when he himself was shaking them—that it was soon rumored that his portion of the treasure actually exceeded that of any one on the ship, even among the captains!

Such was the state of things when the ship and the *periagua* came off the mouth of the Alcantara River and drew up to a fairly safe but shallow anchorage in a

little bay near by. Now ten of the pirates under the command of Solomon manned the periagua, assisted by fifteen of the prisoners for the sake of manning the oars while the buccaneers lolled in their places and drank their wine. They took with them, also, the son of Don Francisco and the captain of the Spanish ship which they were now sailing. He was to be sent ashore when they neared the town in the dark of the evening, and in the town, having delivered the message, he was to tell de la Vega that his son was now ready to be instantly restored to him on the payment of the ransom money. But if the captain did not safely and truly perform this errand, he was to remember that his own brother was in the ship as a prisoner and would be instantly put to death by the most terrible tortures. Such was the arrangement for the claiming of the ransom and it was determined that the periagua should lay by beneath the town, pointed out to sea and ready to bolt for safety in case an enemy should come near.

In this fashion the ship watched the periagua depart and then the crew began a hearty debauch because of a great event—one of the sailors had been deprived of his last penny of the loot by the strangely dexterous dice of Sir Louis Madelin. The whole crew swore that this was a noble excuse for becoming drunk, and they employed the evening busily to that end. They swallowed great bowls of punch. They knocked the heads of wine bottles off and poured the liquids down their throats, until finally the ship was manned by staggering drunkards, with the exception of Martin Gunn, Billy and Sir Louis Madelin. The first two were asleep when, at close to midnight, the periagua was finally seen cutting the waters where the bright stars made their path, and coming up on the ship with sail and oars working. That long and narrow craft came with remarkable speed, it seemed to Madelin, even allowing for the breeze which filled the sails. It came like an

arrow off the string, as though every sweep were manned by many pairs of stout and expert hands. It drove straight on in uncanny silence, so that Madelin—who actually stood alone upon the deck, aside from a few sleeping drunkards—felt that the *periagua* must be pursued. He scanned the point of land around which lay the Rio Alcantara, but nothing had yet come in sight. And as for the crew of the great canoe, he could not see her deck, because her closefights were stretched along her sides, as though she had passed through peril of some sort on the way to or from the city.

Now the narrow craft swung sharply alongside, and Sir Louis, at last, understood. He could overlook the entire deck, now that it was so near and just beneath him, and he saw it jammed with as many men as could be stood upon it. The instant the *periagua* stopped, that mass of humanity sprang to life and washed over the side of the ship in a wave that swept over Sir Louis first of all.

“Gentlemen,” he said in Spanish, and loudly, so that they might hear him, “I am the only person aboard this ship able to speak. I assure you that I surrender and wish you better luck with her than we have had.”

Such was the recapture of that ship. Such was the singular overwhelming of the entire crew which had, so lately, ranged up and down the coast striking the whole Spanish Empire of the Indies full of terror. This was the chief miracle—that these bloodhounds of the sea had been captured without so much as the discharge of a gun, and it was freely said that only the direct intervention of God could have accounted for this.

But Sir Louis Madelin had another mind on the matter, and when the buccaneers were herded up on the deck, secured with irons and ropes drawn so tight that they cut into the flesh, he could not help saying to Cunningham: “Easy living, Cunningham. But what of the dying now, my friend?”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE HOLY OFFICE

THAT night journey of Mary Winton to Nueva Alcantara was made in utter silence. She was too frightened to speak, and the men who had seized her uttered not a syllable, but when the carriage stopped in front of the jail, they led her in, conducted her down two flights of steps, and closed her in a damp and solitary cell. There they left her in utter darkness. She found a hard mattress on the floor and sitting down on the damp blanket which covered it, she strove to bring some order out of the chaos of this horror. But it was all too unreal for comprehension until, on the floor at her very feet, she heard the scampering of some lightfooted creature; then a rat squeaked and gibbered in a far corner and her heart died in her. The cold, the moldy smell, the blackness, were all features of the grave itself!

Yet strangely enough, she slept a little that night, with her back resting against the wet wall of the dungeon, and only wakened in the dawn when something nibbled at one of the hands which were folded in her lap. She started up with a gasp and saw a gray body and a long black tail whip out of view in a hole in the masonry. It was day, and a feeble grayness filled the cell, penetrating through a grill of heavy iron bars which was fitted into the upper part of the door of her cell. Then she saw on the floor, an earthen jar of water and the remnants of a loaf of bread, torn and nearly devoured by the rats.

With that water she washed her face and hands and sat down again, shivering with the cold. Against this she lifted the blanket to wrap herself, but she saw that the folds of it were matted and glued together with green mold and she cast it away from her in strong disgust.

Almost immediately after this, a key was turned in the lock of her door, which opened, and a tall man stood before her with a cropped bullet head and brutal features. He leaned against the wall and grinned down at her in a terrifying fashion for a moment. Then he threw down a woollen garment on the floor, bade her remove her stockings and shoes, and replace her dress with that which he had brought for her. He departed, and she hurried to obey his command. When her bared feet touched the icy stones of the floor, it seemed to Mary Winton that the first pang of death had already seized on her flesh. Moreover, a slimy and horrible sense of uncleanness, which was to grow on her as long as she was in this dwelling of tormented spirits, now passed through her body. She put on the robe. It was of heavy wool, in color a somber gray. It was hardly more than a sack with a square hole through which her head was passed and with two other holes through which her naked arms projected. It was short, coming not more than half-way between her knees and her ankles.

She had no sooner made this alteration in her dress than the jailer returned again, kicked the door open, and gestured to her to rise and step forth. She did so and was bidden to follow the beadle, who waddled slowly before her, being too fat to take long strides, and so conducted her to the chamber of audience which was called the Table of the Holy Office. The beadle, making a low reverence, instantly left the apartment, and Mary found herself alone in the room with two men. It was a long, low room with a great crucifix built against the

wall at the farther end with the form of the dead Christ hanging from it, most realistically represented in carved wood with the deadly pallor and the blood vividly painted upon it. In the center of the room stood a table at the end of which, nearest the crucifix, sat a hoary old gentleman not in clerical robes but with his head perfectly tonsured by age. His silver flowing locks and his long beard gave him both a kind and a reverent appearance. He had before him a large book, with ink near by and was putting the last touches of preparation to a number of writing quills, whose points he tried from time to time on a scrap of paper. He was so intent upon this delicate work, that he looked up at Mary Winton with the absent eyes of one who sees his own thoughts and immediately returned to his labor. But at the other end of the table, nearest to her, sat a monk from whose head the cowl was fallen back to reveal the beautiful and tortured face of Panfilo de la Vega. He now pointed to a chair at the side of the table by way of invitation to her to be seated and when she was in the chair he began immediately to question her. There was this peculiarity in his manner, that when he talked he carefully avoided meeting her eyes at any time, but looked straight before him or at the notary, as though he were addressing his words to that fatherly gentleman.

"Sister," said the cold, grave voice, "what is your name?"

"Mary Winton."

"Do you know in what building you lie?"

"I do not."

"Do you know in what hands you have fallen?"

"The Inquisition," said the girl, her lips barely able to form that terrible word.

"Do you name the Holy Office with that naked word, only?"

She was silent, and stealing a glance at him, she

saw that he was looking down so that she was able to study him for an instant. Wan and thin as he had seemed when she first saw him, he was now greatly altered, for about his eyes were imprinted purple shadowing; his cheeks had fallen. His pallor was a transparent thing and the hand which rested on the table possessed neither flesh nor blood. He was rather like one raised from the dead than a living creature.

He pointed now to a great missal bound with floreated iron clasped about heavy oak boards.

"Lay your hand on that book, that holy book," said the inquisitor, "and swear to speak the truth in this chamber and to retain in inviolable secrecy all that you hear or see, and all that you speak in our presence."

She obeyed. She would have denied the order of God as soon as that of this bloodless man.

"Why, Mary Winton," continued the inquisitor, "are you arrested and brought to this place?"

"I can not tell."

"For what sins are men arrested and brought to the Holy Office?"

"For heresy!" breathed the poor girl.

"Are you, then," said the inquisitor, "fallen into the black and filthy shadow of erroneous beliefs?"

The gulf yawned wide and deep at the feet of Mary Winton, for now, if she assented, she saw the fires twining and writhing before her. The silence grew and became a weight that forced the notary to look sharply up at her, and she saw that age alone had softened his features, but that his eyes were bright and cold as the eyes of a ferret. She thought of the vermin which squealed and gibbered in her cell. They were not more horrible or more unhuman than this face.

The deep, unmoved voice of the inquisitor began again. He was telling her in gentle words but in a lifeless tone that whereas other tribunals closed the hard hand of justice over criminals who confessed in the

most Holy Inquisition, he who confessed willingly was treated most softly and tenderly. Nay, more, he was beseeching her by the bowels of mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to take pity on herself and speak the truth. She listened, but her hunted brain turned back to many a tale of horror which she had heard of this same Holy Office; they promised many things, but when the confession was made, their promise of mercy was fulfilled by exchanging one punishment for another. Against heretics all subtleties were allowable.

Still he was talking, pausing for her answer, speaking again, and finally she heard him say: "When the bread is broken, Mary Winton, is it the body of our Savior which we taste? When the wine is drunk, is it His very blood that passes our lips?"

Horror at that thought involuntarily wrung from her lips the cry: "God forbid!"

She saw Panfilo de la Vega start almost from his chair and then fell heavily back into it.

"Write!" he said to the notary. "Write those words!"

And, through an interval, there was no noise saving the whisper of the pen across the paper, writing words of death and torment for Mary Winton.

"She has confessed," said the inquisitor at the last. "But there is still more. Know, Mary Winton, that you are accused of receiving, harboring, and comforting a relapsed heretic. Will you confess that truth?"

"She has betrayed me!" exclaimed Mary, looking wildly about her, and seeing only the dark and sweating walls of the room, which glistened in the lantern light, for no glimmer of the day penetrated to this dungeon.

"She has confessed!" said the voice of Panfilo. "Write, notary!"

Then the quill wrote hurriedly again, question and answer and all was quiet once more. For the head of

Panfilo had fallen on his breast and his eyes were closed as though in deepest thought. A moment and another went slowly by. Then, with a little choked murmur of alarm, the notary ran about the table, crying out, but Panfilo did not stir. The notary laid hold on his shoulder, and at once the head of Panfilo lolled lifelessly upon his breast.

Confusion followed. The notary cast open the door, yelling for help. Men ran in and laid Panfilo on the table.

"He has punished the flesh until the flesh has failed him," Mary heard a man say. "He has fainted, but will recover!"

So she was led back to the dim, small cell and left in solitude to sit through endless hours seeing again that dreadful picture of the procession of men whose robes were marked with crosses, and with ropes around their necks, entering the silent square of Nueva Alcantara.

The inquisitor, in the meantime, lay for a full hour senseless in the dungeon cell which served him for a sleeping chamber, busily ministered to by the physicians. When his eyes opened at last, he heard a dreamily familiar voice commanding every one to leave the room; footfalls departed, the door closed, and now Panfilo found himself looking up into the face of his brother. No brotherly kindness was in the eyes which stared gloomily down upon him and that sharp twinge at the heart which apprizes men of vital danger near them, made the inquisitor sit up suddenly on his couch. He braced his back against the wall, for he was still very weak and this quick movement had taken the blood from his head again.

"Dear Panfilo," said the elder brother with a voice of unutterable malice. "Dear, dear Panfilo, what has happened so far? Have you yet had time to take her to the torture room, to strip the clothes from her dainty

body, to burn and beat and tear and scourge her—for the good of her soul! You do not answer me, sweet brother, but now I begin to know the workings of your mind as I know the turnings and twistings of a rat in a cage. You have not harmed her yet. You will give her time—much time! You will turn her like a dainty morsel on your tongue. And at the last, when the prison horror is in her face, but some of her beauty is still left, you will take her out and feed her to the flames!”

Here he could no longer control himself, but said through his grinding teeth: “When that day comes which is her last on earth, prepare to go to the devil by my hand, for I shall send you to the fiend who made you and put you on earth—you and your damnable kind!”

Panfilo sighed, neither in fear nor anger, but rather as one who felt the steady weight of a great sorrow and a greater weariness.

When he spoke, it was not to Don Francisco.

“This also, oh, Father and Son and blessed Mother, I lay at your feet for my sins!”

“Hypocrite!” cried Francisco.

“Alas, dear Francisco,” said the inquisitor, “you have already spoken against me things which no other would have endured in patience. But I have endured! But I warn you, Francisco, that if you strike again at the Holy Office with your words, woe be unto you. For I shall take and spare not—nay,” continued the monk, the sudden color springing into his face, “not my father nor my mother—not the child or the wife, the sister or the brother shall escape from my hand. For the cause of God is my cause and he who smites me, smites the Lord!”

Even the fury of Don Francisco recoiled a little from this settled enthusiasm in the face of which mere life and death became negligible things. Besides, he

felt that his hand was helpless as though tied, in the presence of one to whom death and torment for the sake of his religion would be no more than a pin-prick to another. No, to end the life of agonizing penance with the brief death of a martyr would be the sweetest treasure in the world to Panfilo.

Therefore he changed his tone a little, letting awe creep into it, though his enmity and grief were still as strong as ever. He said: "What you have done, passing belief, I shall name over to you word by word, my brother. Because this holy devotion of yours, as you call it, may have blinded you. In the first place, you have dishonored forever the name of de la Vega by tearing from the house its guest—a guest taken and held there by force, and now torn away to die a wretched death."

That last word struck a spark from Panfilo and he flamed again in his sudden way.

"Death?" he said. "Do you speak of death? You talk like a young and ignorant fool, Francisco. Whatever she confesses, she may be reconciled and brought to the true belief. There will be no death!"

"Is it so?" said Francisco. "Is this the limit of your understanding of women? Yet I see how it has been. In the first place those you knew were courtesans and light-of-loves. In the second place, you have left the world and surrounded yourself with fools and fanatics. Harken to a man who wears no frock, my wise brother Panfilo! This soft English girl, when the time comes, will be iron of iron!"

"God forbid!" cried Panfilo, and then struck his hand across his face as he remembered, suddenly, that this had been the very exclamation of the girl herself when he put the final question to her. "She trembled like a frightened child when I examined her," he went on, thinking aloud. "It will only need the shadow of a raised hand to make her say all that she knows!"

“And if she does not repent?”

The inquisitor sighed.

“Trust me,” said Don Francisco, rage and grief breaking again through the steady irony of the tone which he had adopted. “Trust me, she will not repent. I know her well!”

“Have you seen her face torment?” sneered Panfilo.

“I have seen her race face it,” said Francisco. “I have fought them on land and on sea, and God has so ruled that wherever I faced them, I have won no honor. I tell you again, you will find her stronger than stone in the final testing!”

“You are wrong!” murmured the inquisitor hastily. “You must be wrong, brother. I have seen strong men melt like wax before a fire when they came in sight of the black mask of the executioner.”

“I will stake my own life on it,” said Francisco calmly. “When she is put to the question, you will find that her lips are sealed. You will find in her the same strength which enabled the holy martyrs of Roman days to sing while the flames were washing around them.”

“You blaspheme!” cried Panfilo sternly.

“Blaspheme?” echoed his brother. “Fool, you know not how I am moved to take that thin neck of yours between my hands and hold it—so!—till the life goes out. What if I did? There would be one less madman and murderer in the world.”

“You are a brave man, dear Francisco,” said his brother, sadly and quietly, for the emotion which had ruled him at first had now passed under the stern restraint of his will. “But I tell you,” he continued, looking upon his stalwart brother as a weary teacher might have scrutinized an insolent and upstart scholar, hesitating between amusement and anger and restrained most of all by pure fatigue, “I tell you that your bravery has not more weight with me now than the

flapping of a bird's wings. You have come with a fine courage and spoken what other men would not have dared to speak to the inquisitor. As one man to another, I swear to you, Francisco, that I applaud and admire you. But as the inquisitor into whose hands the holy father delivered powers of life and death for purification, I tell you that you have rashly raised your voice against the humble deputy of the vicar of God on earth. In that character, Francisco de la Vega, you are no brother; you are known to me only as one suspected of dealings with heresy in the person of a known and confessed heretic. Therefore, de la Vega," he added, his voice now rising and swelling through the wretched cell, "if you fear the taste of hell on earth, I bid you begone; and when you come again, remember that Panfilo de la Vega died and into his flesh entered the soul of a man of God."

The resolution of a warrior was that of Francisco de la Vega as he had many a time proved in deep perils of the body, but now there was pronounced against him a threat which mysteriously overshadowed the welfare of his eternal soul. For a moment he wavered, staring beneath a frown at the wasted form of Panfilo as though he struggled to recognize in it his brother, but at length, seeing the inquisitor only, he shrank from the chamber. Beyond the door he confronted two solemn figures wrapped in black except that their brawny arms and their legs beneath the knee were bare. In their presences the dismal secrets of the torture chamber seemed to be embodied, and Don Francisco, his heart fast failing him, turned down the twilight corridor and fairly fled from the jail.

He came out and stood amazed at the brightness of the sun and its honest warmth upon his hands and his face and burning through his cloak against his shoulders, as though he had expected to issue beneath a sky of sweeping clouds and into a day dark as night. In

that instant the bright face of Mary Winton which had seemed ten minutes before like the very sun of his existence grew dim as an old and half-forgotten story. He muttered at the weakness which made fear conquer the very love of woman, but he knew that he was changed forever and he went homeward with a sigh of growing resignation.

The stony self-assurance of the inquisitor, in the meantime, endured only until the door closed heavily behind his brother. Then the anger which had sustained him with a false power, melted away and left him trembling.

“What,” he said to himself, “if that swaggering sword-lover has spoken the truth? What if she refuses to be reconciled to the true faith and drives me on to the last terrible alternative?”

He slipped to the stone floor upon his worn and bruised knees. He began to pray aloud: and in this posture, an hour later, they found him when they entered with the supper of black bread and water to which he condemned himself. He neither heard their coming nor their going.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE ENGLISH PRISONERS

THE worthy gentleman who acted the part of receiver of confiscated effects in Nueva Alcantara went by the plain name of Garcia Penny. He was of an appearance as plain as his name. That is to say, he had a round, red face which looked very much as though it had been flushed by some recent deep potations, but it was known that he never tasted the juice of the grape except when it had been mingled with two parts of water. He was a man of such reverend habits, indeed, in spite of his plump face and shining complexion, that it was generally known that he would long ago have joined a monastic order had it not been that in a briefly indiscreet youth he had married a woman who now inconveniently refused to die and give him a holy liberty. The profane, in fact, said that she tormented the good Penny to such a degree that that worthy man was confirmed in his leanings toward a celibate life by the turmoil in his house. In spite of such disturbances, he appeared to bear up in amazing fashion. His voice was ever pleasant, his smile ready, his demeanor gentle. Children and dogs came instantly to him, which gave increased point, by contrast, to rumors which now and again came to be breathed about, that this seemingly gentle man was in reality a very devil incarnate who rejoiced in nothing so much as the sight of pain inflicted upon others. Such tales were no

sooner born than they were destroyed again by the first appearance of the man himself.

It was close to the middle hour of the same night that a feast of plenty was poured into the hands of Garcia Penya. It happened in the following fashion.

Early that evening a rumor had floated through the town of Nueva Alcantara and penetrated even through the stout walls of the building which served as jail and residence for the Inquisition. It was that the crew of the famous Captain Sunday, led by the desperado, was anchored off the mouth of the river and that an attempt was to be made against her by the townsmen. And, at midnight or a little before, the whole town went suddenly mad. The bells in the church began to crash out an alarm. Wild whispers went everywhere. Men rushed out-of-doors with what weapon they could pick up in one hand and their bags of money in the other, or a precious crucifix, or whatever they most wished to save by flight. For the first thought was that the English wolves were upon them, murdering and plundering as they came. But instead—oh, into what a delirium of happiness the townsfolk fell when a great bonfire was kindled in the square and by that illumination and the light of scores of improvised torches and lanterns, they beheld a train of fifty-eight prisoners marching in single file, loaded with irons, and guarded on either side by the valiant heroes who had taken them in the battle!

No sleep that night! No rest! Let the bell ring on, dinning deeper and deeper into their minds at every stroke the glorious tidings of the bloodless victory, and the astonishing news that all the mighty treasure which had been robbed from the treasure train near Panama had been recaptured without a dollar's loss, to say nothing of sundry rich pearls stolen by these same hellhounds in Naruja, in that raid, with the story of which all the Indies were still ringing! Let wine be brought forth!

It was done. Every cellar gave freely of its contents. Casks were broached, and cups dipped in, or purple-stained faces sucked up the redwine without the foolish intervention of cup or glass. More bonfires raged. Every window held its light. Nueva Alcantara sang and danced, and then shouted and staggered through the streets. The buxom dames and the girls with shining eyes embraced the gallant heroes who had captured the English dogs. But in the midst of all this rejoicing, a shadow fell upon the face of the governor. He swore above his wine, then he went in haste to the inquisitor.

But the inquisitor was not to be seen. He was in solitary meditation and not for ten thousand victories over whole Armadas of the English swine would the servants of the Inquisition dare to disturb Panfilo in his prayers. So he went, still cursing, to the worthy receiver, Garcia Penya, who sat in his house regarding the tumult in the square through his window, as became a discreet gentleman. To him the governor opened his heart. He had fifty-eight strong and desperate men; and there was no jail in which he could place them! For the city jail was thronged. A fortnight before two hundred and fifty negroes, giants secured not by money but by war and wounds in Africa and now used to row in the great war galley which was the pride of the coast, had rebelled, seized the cruel captain of their galley with their chained hands, and torn him to pieces. So they had been brought to the town and thrown into the jail. Five of them had been burned for an example in the presence of the rest—burned slowly over fires of green wood which smoked and cooked their bodies rather than consumed them with the biting flames. The remainder were left in the jail to expect the same fate. But they were too valuable to be all thrown away. They would soon be sent to the mines where a skilful operator might squeeze out their strength and their life in some four or five years of terrible labor. In the meantime,

they crowded the jail, jammed every room, and where was there room for these fifty-eight firebrands from dreadful England? In no place except in the jail of the Holy Inquisition. But, since they were heretics, what could be a better place for them?

To this *Penya* listened complacently, seeming to turn several thoughts over and over in his mind while the governor went on to give the details of the whole affair—how a messenger to Don Francisco de la Vega bearing a demand from the pirates for ransom for his son had been intercepted, suspected, and forced to tell what he knew; how the expedition had sallied down the river and easily surprised the *periagua* where part of the English waited with Don Hernando; how they had received a shower of cudgel strokes in the place of gold; how the *periagua*, being mastered in a single rush of small boats, had been packed with volunteers flushed with their first victory; how it had rowed out to the English pirate; how that vessel had been mastered with miraculous ease; and now, where could the prisoners be lodged?

“Has the ship been brought in?” asked *Penya*.

“Yes.”

“And the gold all safe aboard her?”

“Yes, yes! A treasure beyond counting!”

“A blessed day. The hand of the Lord is in it, sir. Have the prisoners all been searched?”

“For weapons only.”

“Why, then,” said the receiver, “the jail of the most Holy Inquisition, I am sure, could be opened to receive them because, I presume, their stay will be short.”

Here he smiled upon the governor merrily, though that worthy felt his flesh begin to creep.

“But,” continued the receiver, “the Holy Office will expect to retain what sundry small things may be found on their persons!”

The governor groaned.

“In the name of heaven, *Penya*,” he cried, “are we to have nothing for our night’s work? The gold belongs to the king. But every pocket of these villains will be crammed with pearls and other jewels. A rich find, *Penya*. Is the Holy Office to have it all, and the town nothing for its labor?”

“You have the glory,” said *Penya*, with his smile which the governor was beginning to hate with all his heart. “Besides, is it nothing to serve God in the person of His inquisitors upon earth? And, finally, in the handling of so much reclaimed treasure, not yet counted or reckoned, it would not be strange if, in the work of casting up the sum, a little should stick to fingers here and there—here and there!”

At this, the governor cast a glance over his shoulder. Then he rose to close the door. When he returned, he was clearing his throat and smiling in an embarrassed fashion.

“I see,” he said, “that you are a man of discretion, *Penya*.”

“That,” said *Penya*, “and silence, are virtues imposed upon me by the exigencies of my office.”

“True, most true!”

“And as for what may be found on the persons of the trebly accursed and proscribed pirates and heretics, I should not be surprised if the reverend Inquisition would overlook a small present sent from the receiver to his worship, the governor—whose valor has brought about all these great results.”

The governor could not stay in his chair.

“My dear *Penya*,” he said, “how much I value you! And how little your true worth is known abroad—though I have heard all men speak well of you! Say no more. They must instantly be sent to your keeping, for my good men have celebrated the victory to such a point that they are no longer able to strike to the mark or shoot straight, and if the devil should come to help

his favorites and loose them what would become of the whole town?"

This was invincible logic. The prisoners were straightway brought from the cheering, hooting crowd to the jail of the Holy Office, and there they were stripped, their stolen finery from the *Madre de Dios* replaced with rags, and the heaped wealth taken from their pockets piled on the table before the receiver, whose eyes now began to glisten and roll in his head, while the governor sat near by, his mouth fairly watering with greed and envy. For, as he had suspected, there was much treasure in sight. Pieces of gold encrusted with jewels—perhaps fragments of broken crucifixes—and there were, besides and above all, the choicest of the pearls which had been taken from Naruja, and which had been kept by each man apart from the other portions of his loot.

The common sailors had been searched first; the captains had been left in a corner of the chamber to be stripped last of all and among these was Sir Louis Madelin whose attitude since the first of this sad affair had been more collected than that of the others, partly because his head had not been so addled with wine when the blow fell and partly because there was more intellect and more stoicism in his disposition. The others could not help scowling at their captors; but Sir Louis Madelin kept an unmoved countenance almost as though he were a spectator in this scene rather than an actor in it on the darker side. It was because of this peculiar and superior demeanor of his that the receiver half suspected that he was the person of the famous Captain Sunday himself, though the crew frankly and heartily told him that this was not so, but that if the great captain had been alive they would not be now in this predicament but would still be singeing the beard of the king of Spain on land or flouting him upon the great highways of the sea. But Sir Louis neither denied nor

affirmed, and his dignity was reinforced by the great power of silence. He was about to be seized and stripped in his own turn when there was a sudden diversion in his favor.

For in came Don Francisco, who had penetrated for the second time that day into the heart of the jail of the Inquisition, partly by the great power of his name and known position, partly through his relationship with the chief inquisitor himself, and perhaps above all because a few gold pieces had opened doors for him. Even the receiver did not dare to protest too strongly against the intrusion, and he listened politely while Don Francisco, having rushed to Madelin and embraced him, turned passionately to the officers of the Holy Office and protested that the son who had just been returned to his arms had been saved from many deaths by the heroic self-sacrifice of this Englishman, and that he himself had owed his life to the generosity of the same gallant gentleman. He offered any sum of money which might be named—at this the eyes of the receiver opened wide—and begged *Penya* to state what would serve as a ransom for the heretic.

Penya beckoned him aside.

“Good sir,” said he, looking wistfully upon the rich cloak of the Spaniard, as though it might be coined into pieces of eight for his own use, “good *Señor de la Vega*, if you had come to me before this man—Sir Louis Madelin as you call him—had entered this building, I should have been your servant in this as in all other things. But surely you must know that in such an affair your brother alone can help you. Go to him, therefore, and perhaps in consideration that there are many others—and a good round sum ——”

“My brother?” groaned the unhappy Spaniard. “Alas, his heart is stone! He can not be moved! A coined mountain of gold would be so much dirt to him compared with the duty of harrowing the soul out of

the body of an heretic. Give me, at the least, your permission to speak a word apart with my poor friend."

"It is granted," said *Penya* with his amiable smile, "as freely as I should grant much more—more—were it in my power!"

"And that his treatment in the prison shall be of the best—his food all the regulations permit—"

Pressing close to *Penya*, he passed into the hand of that gentleman a heavy purse. The fat fingers of the receiver instantly clutched it and he began to breathe hard, for here was loot which he needed to share with no human being—a little, secret golden prize all his own, which would go to swell the hoard which was accumulating, from day to day and year to year, beneath the fourth flag from the left-hand corner of his fireplace.

"He shall be treated as though he were a free and welcome guest here," vowed *Penya*, with tears of sincerity in his eyes.

"You cover me with a thousand lasting obligations," said *Don Francisco*, bowing to keep the scorn in his eyes from being visible. Then he turned to *Madelin* and drew him apart, the guards being waved away by the receiver.

"Sir *Louis*," he said, "I am cut to the heart. Only I beg you to believe that the trap in which you were caught was not of my setting! The gold is waiting in my house, and I shall spend every cent of it, if need be, for the sake of helping your companions, and above all for your sake, my dear friend. My boy has talked of nothing but you. For the damage which that wise head and terrible hand of yours has done to my countrymen, God forgive you and remove all punishment. For the deep debt under which you have laid me, ask the heart out of my body. It is not too much. Little *Hernando* swears that in you he has found the pattern of knightly virtues by which he intends to grow."

"Dear *Don Francisco*," said the Englishman grave-

ly, "if you can help me from this, you have a thousand times canceled any debts. As for Hernando, I would have labored as hard for him—forgive me!—if he had been the son of a yokel. The lad is the purest and the truest steel. Oh, to have the forging of him into the brand which he should one day be! Do not thank me for what I have done for him. But if for my own sake you can draw me one step out of the horrible danger in which I stand—trust me that it will need only to be one step, and my wits and my hands shall turn the one pace into a long league!"

"God witness me and curse me for treason if I do not exhaust my power in your behalf, my most knightly enemy! But ah, Sir Louis, you know without a word from me that you are in ghastly peril. When I tell you that the inquisitor is my brother, and that for that very reason I am less powerful to intercede with him than a stranger from the streets—then you will understand his character."

Sir Louis Madelin was no hot-blooded hero to court death in any form or to flaunt his person in the face of danger, where danger could be avoided. The war he loved with so deadly a passion was the war of wits rather than blind fury, of the fencing point rather than the head-splintering stroke. Yet, when these gloomy tidings came to him, more unnerving because of the hopes that had leaped up in him when he first saw Don Francisco, he bore the blow with one instant of silence and a quiet scrutiny of some rude stonecarving across the lintel of the doorway; as though in that glance he were examining the details of his own tragic death. Then he made a little gesture which the Spaniard had often seen him use before when the dice failed him.

"I understand," he said. "I have only one request, Don Francisco. Tell me, in a word, of the happiness of the English girl who was given into your hands."

The head of the Spaniard fell.

“Sir Louis, conceive the worst that you can conceive. It is not evil enough. She lies here in this very building, in the grip of the same tiger claws that hold you, and in a peril no less real unless she can prove untrue to herself and that I know can never be!”

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RUBY RING

THE receiver was something of a moralist, and he often found occasion in that grisly building, to use this faculty. At the present moment, as Don Francisco left the room, he observed quietly to himself:

“Courage is a comparative thing. It may be a long string, but it always has an ending, and that of this Englishman, whom I thought the bravest of the brave, is now exhausted!”

For Sir Louis Madelin now leaned against the wall with a sickly smile on his lips and a white face. He submitted to having his clothes torn from his back as had been done with the others, but when the tall ruffian who was performing the work made the first gesture, he was brought sharply up by the ringing voice of the receiver:

“Softly, Juan! Softly! Is a man a horse? Gently, my friend Juan!”

Juan cast a startled glance at this unusual caution and proceeded with his work more tenderly; but this token of favor so strangely shown brought a murmur of wonder from the English who had hitherto endured all their misfortunes in a dogged silence, from Billy to Martin Gunn, and honest Tom Bartholomew could not forbear bawling out: “Now, by the name of the devil, I guessed it! The quiet rat is a pope-worshipper and he has made his peace with ’em by some damned papal sign. He’ll be the informer against all of us ——”

He got no further. The receiver had raised one finger and, in obedience, the giant turned from Madelin and, with a single blow, felled Bartholomew to the floor. That brutality at the expense of a warrior whose hands had been proved in so many battles but which were now fettered, brought a deep-throated snarl from the rest of the buccaneers, but Bartholomew, with blood running from his mouth and curses flowing as fast, was now jerked to his feet and the whole number were hurried from the chamber, and brought to their cells. This left the receiver alone, for the moment, with the pile of plunder which was heaped on the table before him, crowned with the great ruby ring which, last of all, had been drawn out from an inner pocket of Madelin's discarded clothes and added to the treasure. Its broad, square face, deeply incised with a coat of arms, or some such heraldic device, brought a flame of joy into the heart of the amiable *Penya*. He took it in trembling hands.

"One item among so many," he said to himself, "would never be missed, surely!"

But then, recalling what happened to those who were false to their trust with the Holy Office, and remembering above all that the ring, being the last object taken was most apt to be remembered by the gigantic jailer and his mates, he hastily dropped the gem and determined to take the whole heap to the inquisitor just as it lay, and before avarice should have bitten him again and more deeply. Accordingly, he swept the whole into a leather bag which he kept for similar purposes and hastened to find *Panfilo de la Vega*.

He found that reverend returning from the little private chapel in the building, where he had been at his devotions again that night and from which he was now coming with the fumbling and uncertain step, as of an exhausted man. He heard the story of his receiver without emotion, and that portly fellow wondered.

Truly it seemed to him that the soul of de la Vega was trembling and fluttering at the failing chain of flesh which tied it to the earth and he thought:

“How terrible an angel he will make in Heaven!”

Yet Panfilo to whom the capture of the treasure ship and the English seemed of the very slightest importance, consented to step into an adjoining chamber to view the loot which had fallen to the share of the Holy Office. There, on a table, the little mass was tumbled forth, but when the receiver gazed with an expectant smile, he found that the eye of the Inquisitor was as dull as ever, and he fumbled at the coins and jewels as though he hardly understood their meaning.

“Fool that I was,” murmured Penya to his thrifty soul, “this blind man would have noted nothing. I could have helped myself to a handful and nothing ever known!”

“But,” he said aloud, “consider this one item only!”

He picked up the very ring which he had so greatly coveted. Even Panfilo seemed moved by its beauty. He stared at it; then he caught it up and remained for a moment in intense excitement, peering at its engraved face.

“A price for every man,” thought Penya to himself. “But for some it is hard to find—hard to find. Who would have thought this?”

When the hand of de la Vega dropped, it was clutched hard on the ring. He was like a man afraid, and his face was working.

“To whom,” he said, “did this ring belong?”

“To one among them—the most considerable man, so it seemed.”

“I dare avow it,” muttered the inquisitor. “A very considerable man indeed! But this—and in the hands of an heretic? No, no,” he added hastily, examining the gem again and more closely, “there would be found in this ruby a virtue to save even a damned soul. Penya, describe him!”

"A slender man, of perhaps even less than middle height. A thin face. A calm bearing. A man who seemed to have no fear!"

"Such would he be! Such would he be!" cried the inquisitor in a sort of ecstasy of discovery.

"One capable of carrying a secret," said *Penya*, sweating with caution as on the one hand he strove to read the face of his chief and on the other endeavored to recall the features of *Madelin*.

"That above all—a secret man, and a fearless. It must be that I am right! Hark to me, *Penya*. Remember with all your soul. Did he not demand to be brought instantly before me?"

"Sir, he did not. He spoke hardly a word, saving to your brother ——"

The inquisitor waved the mention of his brother away, as one dismissed lead when in the presence of virgin gold in bulk.

"Do you mean, fool," he exclaimed in one of his rare passions, "that he who bore this ring allowed it to be torn from him without a word of protest?"

"I swear to you," said the receiver, trembling with terror and choking on the words, "that he uttered not a syllable of protest!"

"Strange indeed," muttered the inquisitor. "But then, the ways of such a man might well be other than one would suspect. But yet, in this place of all others—to permit it to be taken without argument ——"

He examined the jewel again, then called for a knife and with the edge of one which *Penya* offered to him, he opened the edges of the gold setting and presently, with the greatest care, his fingers shaking with excitement, turned forth the jewel into his palm. He glanced at it only a single moment. Then he straightened with a smile of pleasure, but almost of alarm, so *Penya* thought.

"It is as I thought," he said. "Go to this man—by what name did he call himself?"

"Sir Louis Madelin. A good friend, it seems, of your honored brother Don Francisco."

"The friend of others also," said Panfilo with a smile. "Go to him—wait ——"

He replaced the gem and closed the setting carefully upon it.

"Go to him and return the ring to his hand with care. Clothe him; entreat him to a small repast. Let the wine be old and the fowl be tender, for be sure that he will be a judge of both. Then let me know when he is ended and at ease. Serve him with your own hands. And when he sits at his wine and the meat is ended—at that moment, my dear *Penya*," he continued anxiously, "when you observe in him that the fleshly man is content and that the wine has somewhat warmed even his spirit, as is its property—come to me, and tell him that the chief inquisitor begs the privilege of attending him."

Penya turned to the door, dizzy with wonder.

But still his chief pursued him and caught him by the shoulder with wan, thin fingers, indeed, but with a grip such as that which never leaves a hand that has once been expert in the management of a sword.

"Hearken to me, *Penya*," he said fiercely. "If those fat fingers of yours fumble and the gem is lost; if it drops and is nicked in the fall—better had it been for you to have dived to the bottom of a slough of foul heresy. Better for you to have confessed your damnation before one like myself, to whom heresy is more awful than the sins of the foul arch-fiend!"

Penya could not speak. He was convulsed with terror. And when he left the presence of *de la Vega*, he moved step by step, with the ruby cupped between both his quivering palms, stammering out a prayer that it might not be stolen from him on the way, and keeping his eyes glued upon it lest invisible fingers should suddenly pluck at the mysterious prize.

In this fashion he came to Sir Louis Madelin's cell and then raised a voice which brought half a dozen armed guards rushing in haste.

"Open!" cried Penya to them, transferring to them some of the rage and the fear which had been coldly accumulating in his own breast. "Dogs and blind fools—you have done such work to-day—better for you to have supped cup and cup with Martin Luther on your left and Satan on your right. Open the door! Haste, haste! There is a distinct and separate damnation in every instant you linger!"

He had uttered these words in a voice by no means subdued, and the result was that the prisoner, through the grill of his door, had heard every syllable. He started to his feet as the key grated in the lock, then the light of two lanterns swung and dazzled in his eyes. He drew a great breath, steeled all his nerves, and then uttered a silent prayer that under the torment and the shame which now, he was confident, immediately awaited him, he might not weaken or demean himself as a coward. Yet he trembled for the result. To be touched for an instant by the wagging tongue of a candle's flame was exquisite agony. How, then, when half the body was bathed in torturing fires? But, as he stood stiff and pale before the intruders, with the great irons stirring and sounding on his ankles and on his wrists, he beheld the receiver's portly form bowing low before him and holding forth, in the cup of his two palms a golden ring set with a ruby with a great square face, just such as the gem which he had stolen from Captain Sunday and which had been again taken from him on this day of misfortune. He thought at first that he had been damned in some way by being found with this jewel in his possession, but now he saw and made sure that the puffing receiver was actually asking him to take back the gem!

"There has been a great mistake!" stammered the

receiver. "God be my witness, fair my master, that I knew you not. Yet even though you were lost and swallowed, as it were, in the mass of the heretics and the unbelievers, you will remember and mercifully write down in my behalf, that I kept the rude hand from touching you with insolence."

In the meantime, Madelin was slowly restoring the ring, not to his pocket, but to his finger. His imagination worked with furious energy. But he was still at sea. At least he knew that the receiver was not playing a hypocritical part, for it was not in the nature of that man to act any part so well. He was plainly in the utmost terror, and it was Madelin he feared. All of this was marvelous enough. Madelin chose to speak with Delphic uncertainty.

"I trust," he said, "that I shall remember the good which I have seen in every man—and the evil!"

The receiver vowed that he was touched and flattered by the unspeakable kindness of Sir Louis in favoring him with such an answer, and he trusted most humbly that the report which was forwarded to the Holy Office concerning him would be a tender one. For his own part, he swore with a trembling voice, the chief object for which he existed was to contribute as much as he could to the comfort of Sir Louis Madelin. In the meantime, he was breaking off to threaten the trembling jailers with terrible penalties unless they hastened in the work of removing the chains and the irons which weighed upon Sir Louis. The work was done. He stepped forth in the corridor a free man. He was led at once straight forward, with the fat receiver bowing and waving him through every doorway.

"There is some sort of madness in all this," decided Sir Louis Madelin. "And whatever the plague is, it has flowed out from this blessed and mysterious ring which Captain Sunday so wished to keep with him for his death."

Determining, therefore, to watch all signs and do his best to make out in what way the wind was blowing and from what direction it sprang up. He was now conducted into a chamber in which had been assembled the spoils of a hundred or perhaps a thousand unfortunates, rich men and poor. The receiver routed up an old man and a woman and bade them display the treasures of the wardrobe to Sir Louis. He himself aided and picked out jewel-sewn and brilliant garments for the wear of the Englishman. But Sir Louis Madelin, though he was eager enough for the gayest of the gay, limited himself to a suit of rich but somber black velvet, and this he donned, having put on first a shirt with a broad silken collar of Italian lace of whose design he was inordinately fond. Neither would he accept the great golden chain with the crucifix attached which the receiver brought to him. He raised to his lips—oh smooth hypocrite!—the crucifix, and then rejected the whole, while the receiver gaped upon him.

“In the name of heaven, my master!” he panted to Sir Louis, “it is freely given to you!”

“In heaven,” answered Sir Louis, busily maintaining the part with which he had been clothed quite against his choice, “in heaven, my good friend, gold has only a certain value!”

Staring into the round and frightened face of his companion, something moved in him which made him wink broadly. The wink made the good *Penya* stagger, and then smile faintly, hopefully in response.

“Indeed, sir,” he ventured, “it is even said to be paved with the precious stuff. And I can well believe it,” he added in a holy unction, rubbing his hands together, “in fact, I can well believe.”

“I make no doubt that you can,” replied Sir Louis. “And now, my friend?”

Food was next to be found. But the receiver had given his order before hand, and by the time Sir Louis

had bathed and dressed himself in leisurely fashion, marveling all the while what this could be, and still half fearing that he was the object of a dangerous farce, the cooks had been tumbled out of bed at the will of the receiver; the vintners had been brought scurrying in from the square where they were presiding at the revels and growing rich through the outrageous prices which they charged. All was made ready in haste. The pullets were killed, stuffed with delicacies, and thrust into the hot oven. The store of tasties in the command of the receiver was brought forth, and being a man of much precision of appetite, he was ever well supplied. In a trice, therefore, the table was both laid and covered and Sir Louis, half famished, was brought into the presence of a feast. It was a happy continuation of what he began to feel was a dream, but he determined to enjoy it while it lasted. He dined heartily and finished with a good draught of old Medoc which was offered to him. Then he was conducted straightway to another chamber where he found a thin and weary-faced man with remarkably large and bright eyes awaiting him. He needed no telling that this was the brother of Don Francisco and the chief of the Inquisition in Nueva Alcantara. For the family likeness was visible enough, and the priestly character of Panfilo was plain. He observed this man now rise with alacrity the instant he entered and bow low to him, in the meantime signaling the receiver to be gone, a gesture which Penya willingly obeyed.

"Sir," said Panfilo de la Vega, the instant that they were alone, "I should reproach you for allowing the holy father, in your person, to be disgraced and shamed by his other servants."

"What," thought the knight, "has the pope to do with me?" But he said aloud: "Brother, the will of my master is not always to be revealed."

"True," said the inquisitor readily. "I understand

you well, and do not think that I pry into your secrets or inquire after your mission. Yet, if you are willing to speak, may I learn from you by what strange chance you fell into the hands of these spoilers of the seas, these desperate and dissolute men of England among whom we have found you? By what misfortune did they take you?"

"That which seems chance is often elaborately contrived," said Madelin, clinging to the thread of mystery which, he saw, must sustain him.

The inquisitor frowned, as though these continual half-answers were not at all to the liking of his outright nature.

"I can not urge you past your own desire," he said. "If you will not speak, I shall myself be silent."

"Brother," said Sir Louis, "I should gladly tell you all that I know, but I dare not. There are commands which may not be contravened without long and deadly punishment."

"I believe that I understand you."

"But I may hint at certain things."

"Ah?"

"Does it not seem strange to you that these wise destroyers and pirates should have been led blindfold, as it were, into a trap? And that, when the trap closed, they should have been found senseless and helpless with drink?"

"True," nodded Panfilo, "I have heard the tale from Penya. And you, sir, were the agent ——"

"Hush!" said Sir Louis Madelin. "I told you that I could only hint. I beg you to say no more on the subject."

"I perceive," said Panfilo, "that you have been entrusted on a mission of such deadly peril as can hardly be believed—to consort with murderers and cutthroats, thieves and blasphemers, for the purpose of bringing them at last to the hands of justice ——"

"It is the end that must be looked to, and not the means."

"I acknowledge that philosophy. Who am I to deny or to doubt my betters? And truly, I only marvel that the great goodness of the holy father should be extended to even such worldly matters as these. Yet I wonder the less when I recall how his tender care, like a shepherd for his flock, has been revealed to me, though never, alas, so intimately as to you. So that I wonder greatly, Sir Louis Madelin, that bearing his sealed mandate on your finger, you should submit to what has befallen you this night at the hands of your servants!"

The sky of darkness was rent for Sir Louis Madelin. The engraving on the ring, then, was of some meaning which a certain order of Catholic priests might understand, and to this was, in some fashion, added the sign of the pope himself! All was now made clear. He was the personally commissioned servant of His Holiness, it seemed! No wonder, then, that Captain Sunday should have minded the loss of nothing save this ring! Here the inquisitor was speaking again.

"You are now weary, Sir Louis. But when you are sufficiently rested to give your testimony against these lost and wicked souls ——"

"Not a syllable!" broke from the lips of Madelin.

The inquisitor gazed blankly upon him, and Madelin hastened to qualify his horrified denial.

"What, brother?" he said to the monk. "Do you consider me a madman? My value has been that, being unknown, I could render some service by mingling with the sectarians and adding my blasphemies to theirs. Will you publish me abroad by revealing my character? Even if my depositions were made in secret, you and a notary would have to hear me swear to them. And what two men know, the world knows!"

"Not, Sir Louis, in this Holy Office."

"Sir, ten thousand pardons; my orders are written

in my mind in letters of flame. I can not argue. I have brought the game to bay. It is your duty, I take it, to pull it down. As for me, trust me, I shall be glad to dwell privately here until I have rested for a time. If I may not do that, I shall instantly begone where I may find a better welcome. Brother, if I had not wished to keep my identity darkly secret, would I not have revealed myself to the foolish *Penya* when I was searched? No, I left the ring to meet discreet eyes!"

Panfilo bowed, and bowed deeply. But when he looked at Sir Louis again, his eyes were troubled.

"I have already disturbed you too much," he said. "Lay your commands upon me. As for a quiet retreat, I can give you an apartment in an adjoining building."

"Let it be done, then, and His Holiness shall hear of all your kindness. One more thing," he added with a carelessness which he was far from feeling, "let the youth called Billy be brought from among the prisoners and let him attend me as a servant."

"He?" muttered the inquisitor.

"Hush," said Sir Louis smiling. "Would I venture into the lion's den quite alone?"

CHAPTER XXX

THE CHAMBER OF JUDGMENT

THE interview ended at this point, but when Sir Louis was taken to his appointed chambers in the adjoining building, he sat down in gloomy discontent. He felt that he had overstepped his bounds when he demanded Billy. Yet with such false power as they had placed in his hands, it seemed criminal not to attempt to save one of the crew from the dismal fate which awaited him. And when he reviewed the faces of the men of the old *Careless*, he could think only of Billy. No doubt, for all his youth, he was as hardened in crime as any of the others. No doubt Jerry Lang was, of them all, the one most worthy of rescue. But his thought clung to Billy and would not leave him, for Billy was a boy, and as such, deserved the intervention of a man. In the meantime, what would happen when Billy was taken from his cell and, perhaps, questioned? They might probe him as to his relationship with Sir Louis Madelin. If Billy frankly confessed that he had nothing to do with any popish authority and never had had, then Madelin was no better than a lost man.

Accordingly, he looked to his escape at once. They had restored him his pistols and his sword when they gave him the velvet suit. With arms to rely upon, he was trebled in strength. He now looked to the windows of his chamber. They opened freely enough, he discovered, and looked down into a narrow alley. But all egress was blocked by sets of heavy iron bars which were sunk deep into the thick masonry of the walls on

the outside of the windows. He could pass into the hall, of course, but at either end of the hall were stationed armed guards as he remembered from his entrance into this building. In short, he had certainly changed the character of his confinement, but he was still a prisoner. He could not move without the permission of the inquisitor, who now began to appear to him not quite such a simple fellow as he had seemed at the first. In the midst of these reflections, the door opened suddenly from the hall.

“They have come to drag me back!” he thought.

But instead of the dreadful black figures of the guards, it was Billy himself who came in to attend him. And a transformed Billy! He wore a jacket of green cloth worked with a broad design in flowing gold. He wore a crimson hat set off with a yellow feather. His stockings were red again, and his knee-trousers were of the color of the feather in his hat. He had donned an expensive shirt so that a mass of lace fluttered about his throat.

Now, as he closed the door behind him, he swept the hat from his head, made Madelin a great bow, and then dropped to his knee. The knight forgot all his worries and his alarms in his amusement.

“You scoundrel,” he said to Billy, “get up and stop mowing and scraping like an ass. Where did you learn these tricks?”

“I saw a play, once,” said Billy, shying his hat into a distant corner and throwing himself into a chair with his legs spread comfortably wide. “They bowed like that to the king.”

With this, he tucked a leaf of tobacco into his mouth and rolled it dexterously into a quid, for chewing tobacco was his only vice.

“Up, you young fool!” said Madelin. “You may not be overheard, for I’ve already tapped every inch of these walls and I believe them to be solid. But you may

be overlooked. And you can betray us both to the fire, Billy, by indiscretion."

Billy was instantly on his feet, recovered his hat from the floor, and spat the tobacco into the fireplace, where a heap of half-burned logs and ashes lay.

"Sir Louis," he said, "from the day when I first saw you make a sword sing and talk like a person and kill like a plague, I was ready to come when you called me. But now you've turned into a wizard and you melt iron chains as if they were butter. By God, Sir Louis, I'll give up the sea and follow a land pirate if you say the word!"

"So? What do you think I have done, Billy?"

"The cleverest thing I've ever known! You've played a part with us, drawn us into a trap, closed it on us, and slipped out without a scratch. Why, sir, a man who who can do that, is my master—until I learn the same trick!"

With this, he smiled gaily at Madelin, and the latter pondered him. If there was any honest heart or soul in this young rascal, Madelin was willing to surrender all claims to being a man of sense. Yet he liked Billy in spite of himself.

"What happened to you?" he asked.

"The door of my cell was opened by the damned fat-face who took our money last night. He took me out, unlocked the irons, showed me a bath, gave me a pick of a roomful of clothes—and I nipped these beauties, eh?—and showed me half of a pullet and the heeltaps of a bottle of good claret. I swallowed that, and he brought me in to a man with a dead man's face and an eye like a woodpecker's. He drilled and bored at me with those eyes of his all the time he was talking to me. He wanted to know if I were in the service of any man on that ship except my captains."

"Well, lad?" asked Madelin anxiously.

"I told him that there were some secrets which could

be told, and that there were some which could not be told, and that this was one of the last sort."

"Good boy, Billy, you've a head like an old owl on your young shoulders!"

"Say, like a young Madelin, sir, and I'll be happier. I saw that he took what I said to heart and he began to rub his cold hands together, though rubbing could never warm 'em. He asked me straight off, then, who was my master on board that ship."

"I was stumped for a minute, but I tried fetching about on a new tack. I told him that my master was the last man he'd suspect of holding that job." 'A little man,' says he. 'Why, not so small as you might think,' says I. 'You are too full of discretion,' says he, but he grins at me like he might have been a man of heart once in his own life, maybe."

"Have no doubt of that—have no doubt of that," cried Madelin impatiently. "He has a fencer's wrist and a fighter's eye. He was a man of mark on a time. Continue, my lad."

"There was little more. He asked me again for the name. I told him that I'd see him damned first."

"Billy!"

"I was a fool to speak out so, but it made me mad to have him peck and drill at me. 'Have you no fear,' says he, 'of curses thrown into the face of a man of God?' 'I serve a master,' says I—thinking of the devil 'that'll make that right!' That seemed to strike him very pat and true. He still frowned at me, but he began to nod a little. Then he rapped on the table and a beadle came in and he told the chap to take me to you. So here I am, and now where's the wind and where's the land, and are we in shoal water? In a word, where is our course?"

"Close-hauled in a storm with a gale blowing and straight cliffs to our leeward," answered Madelin in the same terms.

"The devil! I thought we were coming into port with the sun behind us!"

"Billy, before we are done with this work, we may have need of each other. Now I'll put the puzzle right for you so far as I'm concerned. When I'm done, if you're a rat, you can go to the inquisitor and tell him what you know about me. That'll save you and burn me. Or, when I'm done, you can see that I am able to be true to my friends and you may wish to fight this game out with me. At any rate, son, here is the tale."

He told it from the first, beginning with the manner in which he had followed and fought Captain Sunday, skipping that visit to the King of England, and then carrying straight forward to his arrival on the deck of the ship, after which, the youngster knew the rest of the story almost as well as he himself did. To this tale Billy had listened with feigned intentness at first and then with a real interest, frowning at Sir Louis Madelin as though he were making the latter out in new colors altogether.

"I have told you this whole matter, Billy," concluded the knight, "so that you might know we are in a narrow pinch together. What may come of it, I don't know. At present we are free, but not free from observation. The inquisitor thinks that I am a specially sent messenger from the pope. But there must still be a doubt in his mind, for otherwise he would not have sent me to this room where the bars are across the windows. And I have no doubt that yonder fellow who leans against the door of that shop in the alley is, in reality, a guard set there to take care that we do not escape through the bars by melting a way through them, so to speak! We have to watch carefully everything that we do or say. For if you betray me, we are both lost. And if we are either of us suspected now, you may be sure that they will serve us with their finest dishes of torture!"

This final injunction Billy listened to with the great-

est interest. For the generosity of Sir Louis in singling him out from all the others on the ship, he had not a word of thanks, no matter what thoughts might be passing in his secret mind, but he now began to smile.

"Those bars," he said, "will never hold us. And once they are gone, I think that no single man will stop the two of us from getting into that street, Sir Louis!"

With that, he made a signal of caution, rolled down the hose of his right leg and pointed out to Madelin a long and narrow shadow beneath the epidermis. When the knight leaned closer, he could see that it was a thin rectangle, clearly defined.

"A strange bruise, Billy," he said, "but what has that to do with the window-bars?"

"Only this," said Billy.

With a knife edge he deliberately slit the skin above that dull blue shadow and drew forth from his very flesh, as it were, a long and narrow bit of a saw with finely cut teeth along one edge. Only a few drops of blood followed, for so neatly and precisely had the steel been hidden, that it was exactly placed between the upper and lower skins.

"Here," he said to Sir Louis, "is the trick that has taken me out of my troubles twice before, but I saw no way of coming clear from this damned jail where they trust to stone more than to iron. This steel is the finest that ever I saw. It glides through other steel like a saw through wood. A drop of grease to kill the noise, and a little patience—and not enough hurry to make the blade hot—and there you are, as free as the air!"

"Where did you learn this?"

"I forget," said Billy, and yawned.

"Shall we try it now?" he asked.

"Yes."

He went to the open window and was instantly at work. In ten minutes he had cut through one of the bars until it was held only by a shred of steel which

could be twisted away in a man's hands. Then he tried a second and a third. When he was finished he said: "Shall we start now? There's still a good bit of dark before the sun comes up."

"Not now," answered Madelin. "I still have one thing to try to do, God knows how!"

He added the last three words to himself. But Billy gave his master no more heed. Having learned that the escape was not planned for this occasion, he looked about him, saw that there was only one narrow bed in the chamber, and presently lay down on a rug, twisted it about him with a roll of his body, and was instantly asleep and breathing as easily as any quiet conscience. Madelin admired him in quiet for some time, then he undressed, went to bed, and followed that good example. But in his sleep his problem still filled his mind. How could he free Mary Winton from the grip of the Inquisition?

In the morning he was wakened while he still ached with weariness, but behold, the unparalleled Billy was already up and about, for two or three hours of relaxation in every twenty-four seemed to be all that this gifted youth required. Billy was given liberty to roam where he would, with a signed letter of safe-conduct written by the hand of the inquisitor himself and signed with the name of de la Vega.

"I shall never see the slippery rogue again," thought Madelin, and made ready to obey the invitation which, couched in the most elaborate terms, requested his presence at the side of the inquisitor during that day's work. Then, fearing the worst, he went down to Panfilo de la Vega. The purpose of that gentleman was revealed at once. He desired to have the emissary of His Holiness overlook his judgments in person, and pass upon the workings of his organization so that the holy father could see how his will was executed even in this distant corner of the world. And, that Madelin

might not be seen or known, a black cape and a black hood with a visor was furnished him, so that he could look out through two eyeholes and see without being seen. Garbed in this fashion—for he could not refuse this grisly invitation without drawing present suspicion upon his head—he sat at the right hand of de la Vega. The first case for that day's judgment was introduced, the beadle, as always, entering the chamber of judgment first, bowing low to the inquisitor as the prisoner entered, and then departing until it was his turn to bring in another unfortunate.

The first to be presented was a fellow of the peasant type, round-eyed and hollow-cheeked with terror. He was asked by the solemn voice of de la Vega if he confessed and acknowledged his sin. Whereupon, he threw himself upon the floor on his knees and vowed that he confessed everything.

"I confess more than everything," groaned he. "Name whatever you will, I confess it. Only, in the name of holy mercy, let me not spend another night in that wet dungeon room!"

"Rise," said the inquisitor. He continued, as a guard appearing from the back of the room dragged the man to his feet. "You, Juan Astarna, freely confess that on the fourteenth day of February, in this year of our Lord, you uttered the following words: 'I have so much of a share of purgatory on earth that I have no fear of any purgatory that may come hereafter!'"

"I did! I did!" cried the other. "I spoke the words, alas."

"You confess and you repent and turn to holy church to hide the face of your sin in her bosom."

"I do! I confess and I repent. The priest had kept my wife from me so long that, when she returned to my house, she scorned me and would not come to my bed. And when this kept up, every day was a hell in my house ——"

"Peace!" commanded the inquisitor.

Juan Astarna shuddered and almost fell, so great was the dread with which that mighty voice inspired him.

"This is the judgment," said the inquisitor. "You are condemned to three years' imprisonment and the confiscation of all the goods in your house and in your bake shop. At the end of the third year of imprisonment, if you have lived after an exemplary fashion in confinement, without complaints, and constantly admitting the greatness of your sin, the mercy of the church and the lightness of your punishment, you will be permitted to go free, only being condemned to perpetual banishment from this land. Take Juan Astarna from this room and let the judgment be instantly executed!"

The poor baker clasped his hands and looked up to the ceiling of the room as he saw the fruit of his lifetime of bitter labors swept away in the breath of this stern judge. But he dared not utter a syllable of complaint that might have sent him headlong to the torture chamber. So he was led, staggering and blind, from the room, and the inquisitor turned with a murmur to Madelin.

"Is it well, brother?" he asked.

It was a moment before Madelin could answer. All that he had heard of the terrible cruelty of the Inquisition became misty and unreal compared with this sample of inhuman severity.

He managed to say at last: "The man blasphemed; and yet he still lives and is unharmed except in goods."

"It is true," sighed Panfilo de la Vega. "Alas, brother, mercy is the sin which besets me. I wear my knees against the stones many and many an hour begging that God may harden my heart against promptings of weak compassion, and knowing that what the flesh is purged of through pain the soul enjoys the benefits

of eternally. Still, I am weak, weak, my brother, and mercy sits too constantly before me!"

This he uttered with his face bowed in the deepest grief of sorrow and penitence. Still Madelin wondered, for though he was tempted to consider this a masterpiece of cunning hypocrisy, yet he knew in his heart that the man was honest. And his hatred was changed to a blending of marvel and disgust.

"Besides," added de la Vega, his face brightening again, "it is not too late to revoke the sentence and to strengthen it. It shall be done. He shall recant publicly one Sunday in every month of the year and he shall be whipped on the Mondays of each week, and he shall be given hard labor on these and every other day of the year. It shall be done, and if his heart is not melted by the knowledge of his sins and the mercy of the church, he shall be yet more tormented for the well-being of his soul!"

Madelin set his teeth over the protest which stormed up into his mouth. But he dared not speak. More than his own safety lay in his coolness of temper.

"Next," said the inquisitor, "we pass into the chamber of torture and there, among others, we will confront one whom you have seen before!"

The heart of Madelin turned to water.

"What person, brother?" he asked.

"Even one of those blasphemers who have sailed with you on the high seas."

"Ah?" murmured Madelin.

"He was most furious and raging last night, as you must yourself have heard!"

"It is Honest Tom Bartholomew!" cried Madelin.

"Honest?" echoed the inquisitor, and darted a penetrating look at Madelin.

"It is his nickname on the ship—Honest Tom was the catchword for him," explained Madelin hastily. "Let us go at once, brother. I am eager to look on the face of the rascal when he faces the torturer!"

CHAPTER XXXI

HONEST TOM ON THE RACK

LIKE most of the important rooms in this dreadful building, the torture room was underground. It was long, narrow, and with an arched ceiling of considerable height from which dangled a number of ropes. There were tubs of water on the floor, and a litter of iron-work. Over this Madelin made his glance pass carefully, though wherever it rested a spasm of sympathetic pain passed through him. The light was that most solemn and deathlike form of illumination—a number of candles in brackets against the walls, their flames wagging slowly back and forth and filling the chamber with dim waves of shadow, as unreal and fantastic as forms seem under water. In a little recess—a sort of apse—at one side of the room, were two chairs prepared for the inquisitor and the bishop, but since the latter was not present to help preside at this edifying function, de la Vega waved Madelin to the second chair. A little to the side, situated so that he could view the sufferer and also immediately heed any word spoken by his masters, was the old notary with his book spread before him, his wise old head canted while he considered, one by one, the condition of his quills. This he gave up, placed them all in order upon a little gilded rack, moved his ink bottle so that it would be most ready to hand, shoved his book to a more perfect distance and then picked up his favorite quill of the present lot and began to trace airy arabesques above the paper to test the steadiness

of his hand, with a smile of angelic content dawning on his features. The fourth and by far the most significant occupant of the place was the executioner. He was clad in his robe of office, a long, black linen gown covering him from head to foot with two eyeholes pierced, which gave him a wholly devilish appearance and furnished Madelin with a fair index of how he himself must look. But the executioner's garment was tied close to his body, revealing his muscular proportions, and the sleeves were turned back half-way to the elbow, so that his big hands and the great cords of his wrists might be unhampered when he fell to his work. It was plain that he was eager to be at it. He had been in that chamber of horrors for an hour or more, but still everything was not exactly in keeping with his desires. There were still a few small engines which needed a bit of adjusting or a trifle of oil to make sure that they would work to the fullest advantage. As the wretch moved about his tasks, Madelin discovered that a deep murmuring sound which he had noticed on entering the place was actually the humming of this man. He now cleared his throat as he heard footfalls approaching down the corridor, and folding his arms instantly presented a picture of devilish malignance to the eyes of Tom Bartholomew. For it was he who now entered. He paused at the door to shrug his shoulders and body so violently that he dislodged the hands of the three or four men who were pushing him forward.

"Keep off, you knaves," said Bartholomew. "I tell you, these countrymen of yours, these thin-blooded, sneaking hypocrites of Spain, may have to be shoved out to the slaughter, but when an Englishman knows that he has bitter medicine to swallow, he steps out and faces it. And so do I, by God!"

With this, he strode into the chamber as fast as his chained ankles permitted him, filling the room with an alarming babel of echoes and clankings.

"Behold!" cried the inquisitor softly to Madelin. "The heretic enters with the devil supporting him and spewing forth insults at every pace. We shall hope to entertain him and the foul fiend that dwells in him to such a purpose that he will sing new songs before he goes hence."

Bartholomew was now in the very center of the room, and he addressed himself to the ominous form of the torturer.

"Here's the chief raven, that doesn't wait for dead flesh before he begins to pick at it," said big Tom. "Why, lad, by the hang of your arms and the size of your wrists, I see the making of a master worker with back-sword or plain cutlass. Or, with a machete in those long fingers, you could cleave a man through the pate till you'd loosened the roots of his teeth. And a man like you to be one of these damned, croaking, masking—"

The executioner turned his gloomy head toward the inquisitor and the latter answered: "Gag him if he will not stop his foul blasphemies."

"Have done with the gag," said Bartholomew. "I like to feel my teeth against one another when it comes to such a play as this."

De la Vega stepped squarely before the prisoner and looked him steadily in the eye, preparatory to speaking, as though he sought for words which would more surely pierce to this difficult heart. During that small interval, Madelin said slowly to himself: "First to stab the executioner, then cut the throat of de la Vega; afterward stamp the life out of that devil in the form of a kind old man. But when I have done all of this, there remains the group yonder in the corridor; and if we could cut our way through these—as two like Tom and I could go very far indeed!—still that would be only the beginning of the work. They would bring a hundred with their shouts. In fact, the case is hopeless!"

The inquisitor was now speaking:

"Thomas Bartholomew, my brother and the handiwork of the merciful Father, however much the devil may work upon your inward nature, by the great good courage in you which makes you so huge in blasphemy, I do perceive a largeness of spirit which, if reclaimed, might make you as big a worker for the true faith. Behold, Thomas Bartholomew, I implore you with the knees of my heart bowed to you, that you confess freely and recant. Or at the least, confess, for then the blackness of your guilt may be purged away and your being freshened and whitened by sweet penance which shall be prescribed to you; and I promise you truly, Thomas Bartholomew, that the penance shall be less than death. Otherwise, as one already more than half convicted of heresy by the admissions of your own lips, we must proceed to the question."

To this appeal, delivered in a voice so tenderly moving and so full of sincerity that Madelin looked upon the inquisitor with new eyes, Tom Bartholomew replied by first raising his chained hands so that he might scratch his head and so stir up the dull wits which refused to coin themselves readily into speech. At length he swore and grunted once or twice by way of limbering his tongue and finally spoke as follows:

"What God may be and His son also, I have a middling dim memory of what my mother told me before I was old enough to wear shoes. But to dig up what I think of Him and tell you, I'll never consent, because you'd find a way to trick me into burning, and there's only one thing I'm sure about concerning your damned crew of liars and cheats, and that is, that no matter how you rack me, you can't burn me until you make me confess. So, start and be damned to you. I've spoke my last in this room, unless pain wrings something more out of me, which God and my manhood forbid!"

The old notary, at the beginning of this speech, had

caught up his pen with an air of anxiety and disappointment, but as he wrote he began to smile, and now he leaned back in his chair and tickled the end of his nose with the tip of the feather of the quill, assured of good sport. The inquisitor raised a finger and the executioner was instantly at work. He stripped big Tom to the buff in a trice, then clad him in a tight-fitting garment of gray cloth.

"The first," said the inquisitor calmly.

The torturer surrounded his victim with a canvas sack, open at either side, which he now secured together, as nearly as he could, by drawing the lacings taut. Then he put such an immense pressure upon Bartholomew that the gigantic seaman could not breathe. The last air was crushed from his lungs. His face turned purple and swelled; his body quivered with intense efforts, and the executioner still tightened the laces!

"A stubborn rogue!" said Madelin, for if he did not speak he felt that he would perish, so greatly was his heart swelling with fury.

"The fiend inside him," said the inquisitor, "turns the flesh to stone."

"If he were honest, is he not the stuff that martyrs were made of?" asked Madelin.

"Honest?" said de la Vega. "There are few of his race who can claim that title. Pardon me, Sir Louis. If I damn the faith of so many of your race, the more credit to a few pure and noble spirits like you!"

"He is dying?" said Madelin, as the face of Tom turned purple with suffocation.

"He will still endure," said de la Vega.

And he said to the suffering man: "Left a single finger and your torment is ended. Lift one finger, in sign that you will confess!"

The face of Bartholomew was too contorted to admit much expression, but it seemed to Madelin that a look of scorn came into the bulging eyes of the sailor.

At a sign from the inquisitor, the bonds were released, and Bartholomew, falling to the floor, writhed and gasped for the breath that came slowly back to him. De la Vega leaned above him. "This is a feeble, faint foretaste of what is to come. Confess, Bartholomew!"

But Bartholomew watched him with patient, heedless eyes, as though he would not waste in speech the strength which he needed to face the further tortures.

"Again!" said the inquisitor, and the executioner went forward to the next grisly step.

But the first stage of that torment was all that Madelin could watch. Thereafter, he had only glimpses which he could not avoid; as, during the second stage, he had one flash of the white and snarling lips of silent Tom. And that glimpse was enough to drench the body of Sir Louis in sweat.

But he dared not show the least feature of his emotion, for if once his mask slipped from him, he knew that he was lost, and the others were lost also. He was their final hope, and yet it seemed to Madelin, at times, as though his very soul was placed in flames. For all his past sins he was now doing penance in one dreadful moment of suffering.

But the second stage of the torture failed as the first had done and left de la Vega shaking his head with wonder, as he gave the word for the third to begin.

"Ah, well, brother," said the inquisitor to Madelin. "These things are seen from time to time. But truly, it makes me wonder that God so rarely possesses the whole body and soul of a man, and the devil so often. Would you not think, dear brother, would you not think that these mighty scourgings of the flesh would drive it to cry out for help? One instant of weakness, and he would be ours. But you see—the creature is adamant, the fiend has so fortified his spirit. Look on him now, as the last phase begins! All that human art can evolve to rend every nerve and fiber of the human body is

being accomplished on him now, but still he is steadfast. Yet see the devil working in his eyes!"

Madelin strove with all his might, for the sake of the other work which lay before him, to give one glance at poor Tom Bartholomew, but he could not force himself to it. Then, looking askance, he saw a strange mirror in which all the sufferings of the sailor were acutely suggested. It was the notary, leaning comfortably back in his chair with his fingers joined neatly beneath his chin, and upon his face the expression of one who has just tasted wine of an exceedingly old and rich vintage.

Even de la Vega seemed moved more than ordinarily by the things which he was witnessing. For, springing forward now, he suddenly lifted a little diamond-set crucifix and cried: "Oh, proud and strong Englishman, in the name of Jesus who is all-merciful, speak, Thomas Bartholomew!" He turned back with a sigh.

"Again!" he said to the executioner. "For how stubborn is this flesh beyond all precedent!"

There was a groaning of the big pulleys at the upper part of the chamber as an extra strain was forced upon the ropes; and then a scream which seemed to come not from the throat of man but from some despairing ghost.

Blackness beat across the eye of Madelin, and he heard through the mist the calm voice of the inquisitor:

"Place him on the floor again. He has fainted. Then call the physician. You see, Sir Louis, that the man had bulk, but no real inward strength. It is ever so with those who are falsely sustained, is it not?"

Then Madelin forced himself, at last, to look. He saw Tom Bartholomew lying loosely on the floor, and now the eyes opened and looked up. A voice came like the voice of a child, so thin and small was it.

"Sweet Devon!" murmured Tom Bartholomew, and his eyes fixed in a distant stare.

To him the physician gave but a single glance.

"One heretic dog has cheated the Act of Faith," said he. "The fellow is dead, reverend sir!"

CHAPTER XXXII

THE INQUISITION STRIKES MARY

THEY carried Tom Bartholomew away; the three assistants to the chief torturer followed the corpse. There remained in the chamber the four men who had first sat there and the memory of the tragedy which had just occurred. To Madelin, there was one thing more awful than the crime, and this was the fashion in which the three officials of the Holy Office conducted themselves, for they acted as though a mere incident in a day's work had been completed, and in fact this was the very truth as he began to understand. The executioner, passing to a corner of the room, refreshed himself with a glass of wine and poured another for the notary—but Madelin refused the glass which was offered him. If his reeling brain needed a stimulus, it was furnished him through his observation of the faces of the others in the room. The executioner was now wiping his lips, having thrown back his cowl, and revealed a round head smaller than the base of the huge and tapering neck which supported it. At first glance there was nothing peculiarly sinister about him except his size and the singular length of his arms; it was rather the face of a boy than of a man—perhaps, indeed, the fellow had never matured in intellect and that explained the sort of foolish ferocity which sat upon his countenance. To Madelin he seemed as horrible as a goblin. The notary was even more repulsive. The old man had not had great employment for his pen

during this ceremony and he had been able to use his eyes far more than his ears. The result was that he had been highly entertained. He could not keep from smiling and nodding about him; once, with a little shiver of emotion, he chafed his wrists as though in imagination the hard-drawn ropes were biting through his flesh to the bone as they had with poor Tom Bartholomew, but as he chafed, even, he began to smile again. Gazing close upon him, Madelin saw that the notary was far older than he had guessed at first; from that withering body and that age-dimmed mind all strength had been drained and there remained in him only the ability to relish the sufferings inflicted upon the bodies of others.

The inquisitor himself, however, was far more worked upon than any of the others by the spectacle which had just been presented to him. "How marvelous are the wiles and how deadly is the danger of the arch-fiend," he exclaimed, leaving his seat and pacing back and forth through the room. "Behold, as the poor flesh yielded to pain and approached dissolution, still the demon, as he killed the man for the sake of receiving his soul into eternal torment, put the name of the Creator upon his lips—a word of salvation in the midst of the work of damnation! Oh, look upon this, Sir Louis, my dear brother in good works! Look upon this and let us deliver thanks to the Holy Ghost which broods over and protects us by day and by night, erecting his shield between us, who profess the truth, and the assaults of Satan who would otherwise prove much too strong for our weak minds to cope with!"

"To know the truth," said Madelin in a hollow voice, "is indeed a great blessing."

"Shall I proceed?" asked the inquisitor, the color coming into his face in his ecstasy, and his frail body trembling with the fierce energy of his zeal.

"Are there still more?" cried Madelin, shrinking in spite of himself from such another scene.

The inquisitor looked upon him with amazement and doubt commingled, and that questioning glance seemed to place upon the shoulder of the Englishman the shadow of the hand of the executioner.

"Are you already weary, brother?" asked de la Vega gloomily. "Are you so soon sated with the spectacle of good works?"

"I did not know," said Madelin, recovering himself as well as he could, "that in this small town you found such a field for labor that your hands are always full of the wicked."

The inquisitor listened to this lame excuse with a glance fixed so steadily upon the face of Madelin that it seemed to brush the hood away. In spite of that protection Sir Louis knew that he had stepped into a deep peril of suspicion.

"Even in a small handful of wheat," said the solemn inquisitor, "there is too often much chaff which must be winnowed away from the minds and the flesh of sinners, winnowed with pain, my brother."

He paused as though there was still much which he might have said, but he left the rest unsaid. Only, from time to time after that, he bent a serious regard upon the Englishman that froze the very blood of the latter. De la Vega now clapped his hands. At once the ponderous door of the chamber swung slowly and softly wide. The beadle—like a round, fat bundle in his robe—entered the chamber and behind him a middle-aged man with a face worn and pale with fear. The beadle had no sooner departed than de la Vega began to speak, mustering a deep, loud voice; every word he spoke seemed a hundred-weight dropped on the shoulders of the unfortunate who stood before him.

"Oñate, you have now come, with more than half proof against you, to the moment of the question which will be put to you with stronger words than the human tongue can ask." Here he waved to the dreadful figure

of the executioner, who had resumed his cowl. "But remember that to penitents who confess their errors, the Holy Office is most merciful and tender, as it is terrible as fire to those persist in error."

Oñate looked wildly around him, saw the executioner, who now made a long stride toward him, and fell groveling on the floor, grasping the border of de la Vega's robe with his chained hands.

"In the name of the blessed Virgin," wailed the unhappy man, "deliver me not into his hands. I confess! I confess! I confess!"

An expression of scorn and disappointment crossed the face of the notary who, however, with a shrug of the shoulders began to write the spoken words. The inquisitor, with a fine cruelty, waited until the pen had stopped scratching.

"What crime, Oñate, do you confess?"

"Everything! Anything!" groaned Oñate. "Name what you will, and I shall confess it. I shall repeat it after you."

"Remember, foolish man, that a false confession is the blackest sin. Better to be harrowed to death with fire than to confess a sin of which you are innocent, and so acknowledge the devil for your master. But did you not in the April of this year come to the door of your shop and, when the Host passed by in the street, fail to uncover your head?"

"Never! God be my witness, never!"

"Write it!" said the inquisitor to the notary. "He persists in negation!"

"No," screamed Oñate. "If it is that you wish, I shall say it and swear it—I did, when the Holy Ghost passed my shop in the month of May ——"

"April, Oñate!"

"It was April! Sweet sir—reverent, kind and holy sir, forgive me! It was in April! And I kept my cap on my head ——"

"It was a hat, Oñate!"

"It was a hat!"

"Rise," said the inquisitor. "Subscribe that paper with your name; judgment shall be pronounced upon you at another hour."

The victim staggered to his feet, raised his clasped hands to heaven, cast a look of dread at the hooded form of the inquisitor, and then took the pen that was handed him. On the paper on which the notary had inscribed the record of the confession, Oñate drew a trembling cross. Then he was led from the room.

The notary was yawning.

"A weak and foolish man," commented de la Vega without emotion.

"Did he speak from fear or from guilt?" asked Madelin.

"It matters little. If he prized the welfare of his body more than the sacred truth which concerns his soul, then he is lost in truth; at least what punishment comes to him is well-merited."

"What punishment," asked Madelin, "will he have?"

"A small thing," said de la Vega. "He will be condemned to labor for three years in one of the convents."

"And has he a family?"

"Yes."

"What will come of that?"

"They may shift for themselves."

"His shop?"

"That will be seized and sold to reimburse the Holy Office for the expenditures necessary to its maintenance."

"In a word," said Madelin slowly, "you strip him of his shop, ruin him, beggar his family, and condemn him to three years of slavery because there is a less than proved charge against him that he did not uncover his head when the Host passed!"

It was some time before the inquisitor answered, using that interval to look with his accustomed penetrating glance through the eyes of Madelin and into his heart. "Are you not in sympathy?" he asked coldly at length.

"I have no criticism," said Madelin. "It is the will of our holy father in Rome. He does not err, and his servants rarely."

But he saw that the gloom did not lift from the face of the inquisitor and he knew that he had fully roused the suspicions of the lion; before long he might feel its claws. However, Panfilo clapped his hands again, and as the door swung open again with no sound, Madelin saw the executioner start a little; saw the eyes of the notary widen like those of an epicure beholding a new and dainty dish. Then he turned his head and in the doorway, as the beadle withdrew, he beheld Mary Winton standing in the prison garb of the Holy Office with chains upon her hands and on her ankles. The trembling light from the candles along the walls grew dimmer and dimmer and it seemed to him that he was seeing her only by the light which lived in her pale face and which streamed along the currents of red-gold hair flowing down her back. All that had passed between was annihilated; he sat again in the cabin of the *Madre de Dios* pronouncing sentence, and it was to this that he had condemned her!

Behind her the door was closing; it fell to without a jar and the candles once more burned steadily in the brackets along the walls. He looked to Panfilo de la Vega, to find some pity in the inquisitor. What he saw was most strange. The stern inquisitor was transformed into a mask of anguish which brought out the gleaming perspiration on his forehead and made his eyes big. He had faced the notary.

"Is the name of this woman written down for this day?" he asked.

"By your command of yesterday, most reverend," answered the notary anxiously.

"Advance, Mary Winton!"

She came from the door toward the table behind which Panfilo was enthroned. She winced from the black form of the torturer. Her eye caught and clung at new, dark red spots upon the stones, and she shrank again. Then she was just before them.

She was allowed to stand there for a long minute while de la Vega leaned forward in his chair and perused her, his elbows on his knees. He clapped his hands twice. It brought two men gliding quickly through the door.

"Bring two lanterns," he commanded.

They were carried in at once and by direction of Panfilo the bearers stood one on either side of the prisoner, raising the lights in strong, steady hands. Thus illumined, Madelin saw that all he had first guessed was far less than the reality, for the rose was lost from her face and the bloom from her lips. Her eyes were deep and darkly blue beneath a shadow of grief and fear which seemed strange, strange under so smooth a brow that was crowned, in the lantern light, with a tangle of golden fire. He could not look longer in her face, though de la Vega was still gazing on her as though she were a book to him, and every second was the turning of a page.

"You are the woman, Mary Winton!" he asked suddenly, and more harshly than Madelin had heard him speak before.

"I am she," said the girl.

"Mary Winton, you have come to the Holy Office that we may beg for your repentance; and if not repentance, full and free confession of your sins. Are you prepared for speech?"

She did not answer him at once, but turning her head a little she regarded some one among those dread-

ful instruments of torment which were ranged along the wall and a highlight upon which had now caught her eyes. She trembled and drew her gown together at the breast as if for greater warmth—drew it together with a hand so slim and delicately made that Madelin felt a voice rise in his throat and pulse away there with the beating of his heart:

“She is a child—not more than a helpless child!”

The notary waited in breathless suspense.

“If I deny you,” said Mary Winton, speaking very softly, but with no tremor in her voice, “you will torment me; if I say what you wish, you will burn me. I am in your hands. I think,” she added, looking around her and drawing in a deep breath, “that you will take my life before I leave this room. Then, God receive my soul! I have no more to say.”

The inquisitor raised his hand; the torturer advanced with his long stride; the notary grinned with hungry content above his writing.

“Stop!” cried the chief of the Holy Office, starting from his chair.

The torturer recoiled a pace. The notary half lifted from his chair. For Panfilo had thrown himself on his knees and lifted his wan face so that the lantern light shone bright upon it.

“Our Father in Heaven,” cried the inquisitor, “pour wisdom upon me; open my eyes; make my heart perceive the truth of your will. Deliver me from doubts which are torture and shadow. Fill me with the light!”

He rose from the floor, staggered as he reached his feet, then rallied for an effort again.

“Girl,” he said, “for smaller proofs than have been mustered against you from your own lips and from the faultless testimony of others, many a one has been consumed at the stake, but I am shaken with each beholding of you. How strange, how strange are the ways of the Father! For who will pour ditch-water into a goblet

of rare crystal, enriched with gold, crusted with jewels, delicate as light? Such is your body, girl, wrought with infinite care by the Maker. Ah, if it has been defiled by evil teachings and if the ditch-water of false doctrines have been poured into your soul, throw them out again, I beseech you. The hand of the Holy Office, after confession, shall fall lightly upon you. I swear it. It shall be tender, tender to guide you and help you up from falsehood to truth. Alas, child, you bar me out, letting me see only the tall heads of barren shrubs and of weeds and thorns, whereas I know in the garden of your soul there are delightful hidden walks, and sweet flowers. Open the gate. Let me enter with good counsel. Sister, trust to my hand and you shall find it a giant's strength, for though the words you speak are evil and your silence still more damning, yet a voice cries to me in the silence; my heart aches; my eyes fill with tears; when you are far from me your face rises and looks sadly upon me. Trust me, trust me, and all shall be well!"

To himself Madelin murmured: "He loves her; but he will kill her."

She only answered: "God, receive me!"

De la Vega reeled to his chair and sank into it half fainting.

"The devil is beside me whispering," Madelin heard him mutter. "*Mea culpa! Mea culpa!*"

Then he raised his hand. The torturer was instantly beside her. He fumbled at the throat of her dress. To waste no time, he wrenched the neckband which parted, and the dress split down the arm, exposing half her bosom and the gleaming shoulder, thinly shrouded in her shift.

The rope of fear which had held Sir Louis Madelin snapped. He leaped from his place, snatching out his sword from beneath his cloak, yet it was with the hilt rather than the blade that he worked. The metal struck

the big fellow on the side of his hooded head and he dropped. Sir Louis, looking down on him, slowly put up his weapon again. Wild thoughts worked in him as the bright blade went gradually home—to kill de la Vega and the notary with his imbecile malice, then take the girl and let death come to them together. But he knew it was folly. It would only increase the pangs of her final tormenting if he fought for her. The door was already opening, and a dozen men were crowding through it.

“Take him,” commanded the inquisitor. “Lead him back to his room. Keep a close guard on your lives!”

Sir Louis Madelin, however, turned his back upon the men of the Holy Office. Brushing the hood from his head, he stepped across the prostrate form on the floor and went to Mary Winton where she leaned against the wall, half fainting. He took one of those small, cold hands and pressed it against his lips.

“Lady,” said he, “forgive me for the harm I have done you. Forgive me if you can, for God never will!”

Then, with a guard holding him by either arm, with others before him and behind, he was taken from the chamber.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FREEDOM

BILLY, from a corner of the room, watched his patron enter with the guard. He neither rose nor spoke, but dropping his chin in his hand, he watched with his pale blue eyes, and listened while the guards consulted with mutterings as to whether the words of the inquisitor had meant that a guard should be placed in the room or outside of it. It was finally determined that they should effect a compromise, keeping one man in the chamber to note the movements of the Englishmen and to warn the others in case there might be a need of them. The others then retired to the hall, leaving behind them a stalwart half-breed, armed to the teeth and fingering the hilt of his sword as though he were eager to be at his prisoners.

Sir Louis viewed him for a moment, shrugged his shoulders, and then turned to the window. A long procession of slaves were filing through the alley beneath him, gigantic negroes, their nakedness covered with a few rags about the loins. He began to count them mechanically, a subconscious mind working, as they went by him linked together in couples with long ropes running up and down the lines, noosed around each throat, and passing on in an endless chain. The hands of the slaves were tied behind them to make them perfectly helpless, while at intervals along the column marched soldiers with whips in one hand and drawn swords in the other. It did not require long study to

see why these prisoners were so carefully guarded. For the blacks were all of great size and muscled like so many giants. One of them stumbled and fell to his knees, tightening the rope around his throat and those immediately before and behind him till they were almost strangled. Instead of loosening the knots, the guard near by whirled his whip and cursed them fluently. Twelvescore and eight of the slaves went past guarded by thirty soldiers and disappeared in the darkness of the evening which was thickening each moment. These must be the rebellious negroes of whom he had heard, who were to be marched to the mines and there killed slowly by labor.

He noted these things mechanically; his mind was filled with the white face and the great dark eyes of Mary Winton and the solemn conviction that he had seen her for the last time unless, perhaps, he marched with her in the procession which would carry them both to the stake. Of his own fate he had no doubt. Now that the suspicions and the wrath of the inquisitor had been brought upon him, it would not take any long examination to reveal that he was an impostor and that he had no right to the ruby engraved with the symbols of the holy father in Rome. After that disclosure, the full resources of the torture chamber and slow fire must be used with the most ingenious art to extract the last possible scruple of suffering which his flesh could endure. That time, however, could never be allowed to come. They had taken him under guard, to be sure, to the chamber, according to the instructions of de la Vega, but they had left him his sword because his arms had not been mentioned in the instructions. With that sword, if he could stab the soldier on guard, and bar the door before the outcry of the veteran called in the other guards who waited eagerly, no doubt, in the hall, there might be a ghost of a chance to wrench the bars from their places and descend to the street. After that,

there was perhaps one chance in five hundred that they might escape from the town to the sea, or to the mountains inland.

This was the scheme which he meditated, not with hope, but because he was determined to die in action rather than through the torture. In the meantime, the faint, shrill whistle of Billy annoyed him. That young worthy had drawn forth a long and heavy hunting knife which was his constant companion, and was toying with it idly, tossing it from one hand to the other as though he were immune from harm from the razor edge. The chief bar to his scheme, however, was the vigilance of the half-breed, whose little bright eyes were never for an instant off Madelin, no matter where the latter turned.

"Billy," he said suddenly, "be quiet. That damned whistling is like a knife in my brain!"

Billy rose and bowed to him like a courtier.

"Sir," said he, "I am very sorry."

He had bowed with one hand across his breast, and as he straightened, the arm flew out to the side, a streak of light flashed from it and disappeared in the body of the sentinel. The half-breed tore the knife from his breast, whirled about and seemed to attempt to shout, or to gasp for breath, then slumped into the arms of Billy, who was already beside him to receive the weight.

"Now," said Billy, "we have our chance. What's up?"

"Hell and all the devils in it," answered Madelin, sliding home the bolts which guarded the door on the inside. In so doing, however, one of the bars grated, and even this small sound was enough to alarm those who waited on the outside.

"*Hola! Compañero!*" they cried.

"We have five seconds!" whispered Madelin. "Quick, lad. God bless the rascals who taught you that art of flinging a knife like a bullet from a gun!"

"Indians," answered Billy curtly, picking up his fallen tool, and ran with his companion to the window.

Under their strong hands the bars came off easily, one after the other, but in the meantime, the shouting at the door had risen in volume. They could hear foot-falls approaching in haste. Then the hubbub fell to a murmur and the strong voice of the inquisitor was heard exclaiming: "Waste no more time. Beat in the door. In five seconds, a heretic English dog can work five years of harm!"

Instantly, a heavy blow fell upon the door and shook it from top to bottom. A bullet was fired through it. So much they heard and saw, then they were through the window. A passer-by looked up with a shout of wonder which was only half uttered as Billy dropped upon him like a bolt from heaven and flattened him on the stones of the alley. Madelin was presently beside him.

"No running," said Madelin to the youngster, stirring the fallen man and making sure that he was senseless and could not instantly raise an alarm. "Walk, Billy. We must take our time. If we run, we convert every man in the town into a bloodhound to follow and pull us down. And the Indians are deer afoot!"

As he spoke, he started off down the alley, his legs tingling to leap away at full speed, but sternly schooling himself to a patient self-control. From above them in the dreaded house of the Inquisition, the shouting was rising every minute, together with the loud battering of the door, the fall of which was now announced by a still louder crash than the others. But now they turned briskly out of the alley into the street beyond, hastening their last steps, but hastening them in vain, for from the window behind them voices cried out to give the alarm.

There was nothing for it but running now. Madelin fled straight across the wide street, plunged into the

dark mouth of an alley on the farther side and slowed to a walk again. He passed half a dozen groups of men going homeward to their night meal. They gave him way because of the white face and the rattling sword which announced that one of the masters of the land was approaching. They dared not so much as look at him as he went by. But behind them they heard the alarm gather and spread in all directions with a dull roaring.

They turned two more corners and came full on the train of slaves. The procession of these had not been halted because of the clamor which started from the house of the Holy Office but because, for some real or imaginary offense, the captain of the soldiers had determined to have one of the negroes flogged. He had taken the poor fellow from the line. Four men held the struggling black on the ground. Another, famous for skill with the whip, stood back, drawing the snaky lash fondly through his hand, preparing to draw blood as with a knife at the first stroke. Most of the soldiers had drawn near to watch this ceremony, and men, women and children of the town were flocking about, laughing, chattering, gaily expectant. The lash whirled, fell, and the unfortunate writhed, but without a cry at the pain, though the blood had been drawn.

"That," muttered Sir Louis Madelin, excited to admiration in spite of his own danger, "is a man!"

"An army of 'em," said Billy. "If we cut some of those ropes, Sir Louis, we'll have friends in Nueva Alcantara."

"Billy," whispered the knight, "a bright angel has inspired you!"

He could see well enough that to attempt to escape from the town by mere flight would be folly. Already the pursuers were flocking through the streets, and with their outcries they had even drawn some of the spectators from the fascinating entertainment of the flogging. Up the very street in which they stood half a

dozen men were rushing, shouting the name of the Inquisition and bidding all good Christians come to the capture of two escaped English heretic dogs. There were some half-dozen seconds left to Madelin and Billy. They used them wisely and well. For, beginning at the rear of the train of slaves, they worked like lightning with their knives. With every stroke a pair of muscular hands was freed or the long rope which connected and bound their necks was cut across; with every stroke, too, the Englishmen were whispering:

"Libertad! Amigo!"

Two magic words, long unheard by those wretches. On every back were raw weals of whip cuts. Their bellies clove against their spines with starvation. Their ribs were like great gaunt fingers clasped about their sides. The stench of their sweat and filth was stifling, for they had been kept like swine in a sty. But their brains were not dulled. They did not stir even after their bonds were cut, for they saw the two bright knives passing farther and farther up the line, slashing their compatriots free every tenth part of a second. They had been marching to torture and death, but here were two spirits come out of Heaven to rescue them!

Thirty men were already free when the pursuers reached the rear of the procession of the slaves and, making out the forms of Madelin and Billy without being sure as to the nature of their business, swerved in at them with yells of joy. For to please the chief inquisitor was indeed to secure a certain passport to Heaven! They were running now in the hope of a reward greater than gold could possibly be. But neither Madelin nor Billy turned from their work at the ropes. For when the guards hurried up, the loosened negroes spilled around them and blotted them from the earth and from life. Madelin, with a hasty backward glance as he heard a shriek which tore his heart, saw the leading soldier swept into the arms of a black giant, saw his

body bent back, and saw him fall with a broken spine. He had been crushed across the knee of the monster as a boy would snap a stick of kindling wood. There were other cries, but brief ones. Those luckless agents of the Holy Office were killed by bare hands made strong by labor at Spanish oars and stronger still by the black magic of Spanish cruelty.

The guard, in the meantime, turned back from the flogging with their swords waving, shouting threats. But they did not charge home. The knives of the English had not been idle all this while and as a score of guards ran in, fifty black devils rushed at them with throats so choked with hatred that they could not utter a yell. Two or three guns were plucked out and fired. Then the soldiers fell back to their comrades, dropping their swords, many of them, and reaching for their muskets. They had no time to bring the latter into play. The swords were snatched up. The negroes raced on like the head of a wave whose roots have struck shoaling sand. That wave met the soldiers who shrieked as if every reaching hand that seized them had fingers of fire, melting their flesh away. The rest of the guard was busy yelling for help and retreating as fast as it could, but now the head of the column of slaves who had seen all these things, began to turn and curl across the street, like the first movement of a slowly coiling python. The soldiers were pinned against a wall of black men whose freed companions flooded against the townsmen and melted them away. It was not a fight. The guards had practised so many cruelties at the expense of the blacks that to see them in possession of liberty was like beholding a nightmare transformed into a reality. Some of them turned to strike a few desperate blows, but the majority huddled together like sheep. The black men tore them to pieces in thirty seconds, cut the ropes which tied the hands of the rest of the slaves, and then, armed with whatever they could lay

their hands upon, or sufficiently formidable with even their naked fingers, they massacred the bystanders who had not yet fled and began to break into the first houses. Billy, at this point, came to Madelin. The knife in the hand of the boy was dripping blood and his right arm was wet to the elbow. He was panting, as much with ecstasy as with his labors.

"The fools are putting their necks under the axe again," he gasped to Madelin. "I try to stop them, and tell them that the Spanish soldiers are coming, but they tell me that I'm only a boy. We'll all be butchered in another half-hour."

It was plain enough that the crisis was growing more and more desperate. The negroes had gone mad with joy of freedom. They were hungry for a deep revenge; they were starved for the lack of food; they were like so many lean-ribbed tigers made savage by famine but not yet weakened. In the meantime, as they danced and shrieked wild, tuneless songs, and ripped out the doors of the adjacent buildings to get at the people inside them, Madelin heard the rolling of drums at one end of the street and the shrill of a horn at the other. By that he knew that the soldiers had been brought to stop up the street on both sides, after which a few cannonloads of small shot would wash away every vestige of the revolt. With the fall of the negroes disappeared his own last chance for freedom. He looked about him desperately. To control that raging mass of blacks he was as helpless as in the face of a raging watercourse. Half of them understood nothing saving two or three words of Spanish. Even the most eloquent and well-educated of them could not use a vocabulary greater than a child's. But these men he must find some means of controlling as he and Billy, and a quarter of a thousand barbarians would be slaughtered before the night had come thick and black.

It was not hard to distinguish the leader of the

negroes by this time. A monster who was a full span taller than six feet—a mere youth in his later teens but with the physical development of maturity—had caught a woman, torn a red cotton skirt from her body, and knotted the rag about his woolly head; in one hand, as a weapon, he dandled an old-fashioned musket of great length and weight as though it were a feather; in the other hand he waved a sword which he had snatched from the sheath of one of the soldiers. He was now with a voice of thunder rallying his followers to the assault upon a house larger than its neighbors and apparently filled with a booty more to his liking. Moreover, they listened to his commands; or if they ran past him, unheeding, he struck with the musket and laid them bleeding upon the street. Through this young brute Madelin saw that he must command the mob or be destroyed with them.

He ran to the big fellow, pointed up the street, and dramatically pulled a finger across his throat. There was no mistaking such language as this. But actual speech was prohibited by the wild screaming and singing of the other negroes who flocked to the assault upon the house. So the giant scooped up Madelin as the latter himself had sometimes picked up a child in the hollow of his arm. Raised thus even above the head of the chief, for such the negro leader seemed to be, Madelin was delighted to hear the latter say in good Spanish: "Speak, Englishman! Who will you have us kill first?"

"Listen to me," shouted Madelin above the tumult. "They have stopped up the street at both ends with soldiers—"

"We'll walk on them like rotten fruit!" said the negro, his reddened eyes turning wild.

"And cannon!" continued Madelin.

The giant grew cold sober, for the white man's cannon were to him the white man's magic.

“Break through that little house!” commanded Madelin, pointing. “Break it down to get through to the other street. Then follow me!”

“You have freed us and you will save us,” said the giant, losing half the wild confidence which his new freedom had given him. “Lead, master!”

Then, raising his immense voice, he brought some scores of his men about him and bellowed the commands which Madelin had suggested. The house was smashed open at once, and not too soon, for already compact lines of troops were visible converging from either end of the street, their front glittering with muskets, while horses dragged several small cannon forward. Through the house the negroes poured, beat open its rear door, and pressed on to the street behind. Madelin, Billy, and the young chief trotted in the front of the column. The others followed, yelling, at such a pace that no regular troops could follow them on foot. But two-score cavalry could and did pursue and overtake them. Madelin looked back. He knew that there was not a loaded gun in the ranks of the negroes. He knew that there were nothing but a few knives and swords which would be effective weapons in their hands. But forty horsemen, charging at full speed, would plough through that naked mass of men with ease. The smooth street favored them. He pointed out the coming destruction to the chief and gave his advice.

“Tell your tribe to split in two parts and run under the shelter of the houses on each side of the street—then come out at the horsemen as they go past!”

It was done. The young chief yelled his command. The negroes wavered; then the rush and crashing of the horses at full gallop gave them wings. They plunged for the shelter, and splitting away on either side, they huddled back against the faces of the houses and left the cavalry charge to rush into emptiness. Some of the troopers turned right and left to spear the

slaves with their swords but the majority were kept together by their closely packed numbers and the velocity of their galloping. That was why the charge failed. Ten men on trained horses, could have smashed through and through that naked mass of negroes, and Madelin knew it. But forty men, no longer acting in unison, were no more than forty men in the hands of six times that number. When the charge was spent, the troopers turned at random on either side, swinging their broadswords, but as they scattered, shadows with gleaming eyes and grinning teeth leaped in around and beneath their blades. They were dragged off, butchered, and the runaways rolled on toward the open country with still more swords, guns and knives as weapons, and, moreover, with forty horses for their use. They came out into the open plain. Before them the *cordilleras*, thirty miles away, seemed astonishingly close, blotting out the stars like clouds, and toward the peaks they set their course.

CHAPTER XXXIV

HOW MADELIN PLAYED GUERRILLA

ENOUGH horsemen poured out of Nueva Alcantara that night to have swallowed Madelin and his negroes a hundred times over, but the riders could not use their swords on an enemy they could not find; and when they missed the trail in the first few hours all their spurring was wasted for the whole body of fugitives was moving away at a shambling run that ate up the miles as fast as a cavalry trot. By the morning twelve-score negroes were hiding in the hills and there they remained skulking through the fortnight that followed. There was not a day when danger was not near them—danger of slow-moving bodies of Spanish infantry that probed the valleys, one by one—danger of thundering troops of horse with every rider wearing a hungry sword. That very danger saved them because it kept them in solid unit obedient to the will of Madelin. He had saved them from the tiger's claw once, and they trusted him more and more as they saw him fencing with the Spaniards day by day and winning every bout.

The young negro chief was willing enough to let Madelin lead. The Spaniards had given him the name of Mora and he retained it in place of his own long unpronounceable, which was a sign that he was made of teachable stuff, and he made himself useful as the interpreter of Madelin, the go-between who enforced his orders among the rank and file. For his own part, Mora vowed that the Englishman was his father and

his brother, and, club in hand, he promised to crush the skull of the first tribesman who revolted against the white leader.

So the path was cleared for Madelin to model of these rough elements an effective fighting force. It was a sad task. Firearms remained a mystery to them; they closed their eyes invariably and tilted the guns skyward before they fired. Swords were not much better. They used them like clubs, or in a pinch, they were apt to seize a fine cut-and-thrust rapier by the hilt and launch it like a spear.

In two days Madelin saw that he must make his war with soldiers unarmed by gun or sword-blade! What was left?

There were clubs, in the first place. They turned a twenty-pound bludgeon into a feather and dealt out strokes that crushed like eggshells steel morions and the skulls inside them. There were knives also, which the black men used as though they had been born with steel at the tips of their fingers. But the greatest revelation was shown to Madelin much by accident when one of the negroes lashed the pointed half of a broken sword to a staff and hurled the improvised lance at a tree thirty strides away. The point sank more than a foot in the tough wood and Madelin saw deliverance in it. In a trice their store of swords were converted into long-headed spears and the proof of their value was not long delayed.

A scant three days afterward, threescore and five steel-clad footmen, armed with muskets and swords and pikes, ran Madelin's fugitives into a blind canyon, from which there was no escape. There was nothing to do but use the trap on the hunters. He scattered his black men among the rocks and when the infantry were close at hand one blast on a whistle raised twelvescore chosen Africans, each armed with a weapon to which he had been trained from infancy, and each spear

headed with steel of such a temper and a cutting edge as never a black man had wielded before. And twelve-score lances flashed at the soldiers who were still called the finest infantry in the world. That one volley ended the fray, for only a scattering of men remained on their feet after it, and they were destroyed by a single gesture.

It was a great day for Madelin and his men. The pack was blooded twice, now, and thereafter they would have attacked a herd of lions at his bidding. But that was not what he wanted and he knew well enough that he could never bring his men into action save on broken ground or in the night which allowed them to come close to grips with their enemy before they were revealed attacking. They must attack by surprise, then, or not at all.

Having come to that conclusion, Madelin banished firearms altogether from the party. They marched with two or three terrible javelins at hand, a massive club dangling from the shoulder, a long, heavy-bladed knife at the belt. So equipped they were fitted to be night prowlers and nothing more. And Madelin knew their qualities. Granted every favorable chance, and they would leap at their foe, filling the air with the shadowy javelins, headed with bright rays of steel. Then closing with clubs first and knives last, they fought like madmen for a single minute. If that hysterical effort failed, they were ready to turn and run for their lives. It was simply up to their white leader to see that they were never led to work which would take more than the minute of effort.

In the meantime, danger haunted them. Through all the days that followed there was hardly a moment when the deep baying of bloodhounds working at the trail was not booming somewhere within the horizon of their lives—danger so frequent and so great that Madelin began to fear lest even he should become cal-

loused and indifferent. The negroes, filled with greater and greater insolence of power, deemed themselves invincible. But the leader felt the truth. And at the close of the fortnight of wandering he said to Billy, where they sat withdrawn from the circle of the fire-light:

“It’s like cruising with one ship, while the Spaniards hunt us with fleets. No port to put into for repairs—and a crew you can’t trust.”

A stinking cloud of the smoke of burned meat was wafted toward them and set Billy choking and gasping. They had encountered a small flock of sheep that evening. Now there was mutton sizzling on a score of spits. The white men were sated long since, but the negroes ate as though to provide against a coming famine. And yonder lay the shepherd tied hand and foot, waiting for the cutting of his throat, no doubt! So Madelin and Billy took the poor shepherd away to the top of the next hill. There they could sit and keep watch, and listen to what he had to say, if perhaps they could persuade him to talk at all. They were not so sure of that! But when he discovered that they did not intend to cut his throat his gratitude was so great that speech fairly bubbled from his lips as long as they cared to listen. Billy asked the questions while Madelin, drinking all in, kept his eyes scanning the horizon.

It was a clear and quiet night; a cool air was blowing from the sea. On one hand the plain lay black as an ocean while on the other the piled *cordilleras* shot upward toward the stars. Three fires, one on the upper slopes to the east and two on the plain, looked at them like tiny, single eyes of red, and Madelin was ill at ease. Though the fires seemed at a safe distance, and though the blaze around which the negroes were still feasting was masked by a hollow, who could tell how far scouts might be ranging abroad on a night so inviting. There was no sound of the bloodhounds, at

least. That fatal music was missing on the horizon, and for the silence Madelin was grateful.

In the meantime, the shepherd listed the catalogue of their dangers. Three hundred well-trained soldiers mounted on fast horses, had been brought up all the way from Chile to scour the plain and erect a wall which the negroes might not pass. In the meantime, all the other armed parties, foot and horse, were to press into the hills and drive out the hiding enemy from the covert to the open.

"Talk!" said Billy to his captain. "We'll dodge them still."

"One brush with the cavalry will be enough," answered Madelin, very somber. "When the spearmen in armor come galloping—why, twenty of them could crunch through twice our numbers. Twenty of them would slaughter the whole black herd for us!"

"Then we'll march higher into the mountains."

"These are jungle folk—not mountaineers. The first frost would chill their courage fast enough. And kill them, too, Billy!"

"Then there is only the sea," said Billy. And he began to yawn and sharpen his knife delicately on the sole of his foot. His boots had been worn to bits long before. "We can make for the sea!"

"What when we come to it?"

"Swim to England, I suppose. Or find a skiff and row there. Or build a ship and sail there."

"Ay," said Sir Louis. "Perhaps we can hire the Spaniards to build the ship for us. Now ask him about Nueva Alcantara and our shipmates. How long ago were they burned?"

"All have been condemned," said the shepherd, "but they have waited to bring in the runaways—pardon me, señor! Now they will wait no longer. The bishop has come and they say that to-morrow is the day for the burnings."

"Then there will be some good English swearing in Nueva Alcantara before to-morrow night," said Billy. "I'd like to see Cunningham's face behind the flames. There is a woman—an Englishwoman—one of the heretics, *amigo*. What of her?"

"She is safe enough," answered Sir Louis. "Don Francisco will see to that."

But the quiet voice of the shepherd answered: "She, also, is to die!"

To the shepherd the silence of his captors seemed to betoken their interest in what he had to say, and he enlarged on the theme. He himself had been in the church at Nueva Alcantara to hear the sermon on the Day of Faith. And with his own ears he had listened to the voice of the inquisitor. And with his own eyes he had seen the inquisitor collapse. He was so pale and pure a soul, that Panfilo de la Vega, that surely he was not far from Heaven. He, the shepherd, listening to the fiery sermon, had felt a hundred years of purgatory swept from him by the words of the sacred man.

Then Billy—was it, perhaps, from some merciful motive as he saw the head of Madelin bowed low on his breast?—asked sharply: "We sailed a good cargo of gold and silver and jewels also into Nueva Alcantara. What has become of them, *amigo*?"

"With my own eyes, señor, I saw the great ship in the harbor; I counted the three masts, as tall as trees. It was loaded with the treasure and on the next day it was to sail to Spain."

"Ay, ay, ay!" moaned Billy. "It is all far off at sea by now. Oh, may some lucky Englishman clap aboard her and carry her home a prize! Their money and our glory, Sir Louis, is it not?"

But Madelin was already marching down the hill toward the feasters, with the smoke of his pipe about his head and the face of Mary Winton blown between him and the stars. By the fire he found Mora and

drew him back into the darkness. They squatted on their heels side by side and Madelin sketched his plan. Some truth, more lies, a great deal of earnest passion. But all in simple words, that Mora could understand.

He had never intended, he said, that the blacks should waste the rest of their lives hunted in the foothills. They had been harried and trailed long enough.

"Now," said Sir Louis, "if I show you a way to go back to your own land, Mora, where the steam is rising out of the forest, and the beasts cry at night just beyond the village huts, if I show you a way to this, what will you and your men do?"

"Pray to you like a great god!" said Mora.

"Fight for me and yourselves, Mora. To-night we are going to march across the plain to Nueva Alcantara and find a ship in the harbor and sail away in it to your own land!"

And before Mora could stammer out the first bewildered objections, he answered them fluently, drawing liberally upon his imagination to make his case as logical as possible.

The soldiers were already drawn out—they had certain news—to hunt them. But would the soldiers ever dream of hunting them toward the town? No, there was only a fringe of troops at the edge of the hills, and beyond that fringe was the plain in which all the houses would be empty because surely man and woman and child would have flocked to the town to see the Act of Faith on the morrow. So they would steal across the town, and at the break of day they would spring upon it and cut down any small random guards of soldiers which they might find, and so on to the ship in the harbor.

"If we can be sure of the ship!" cried Mora.

"I am certain of it," lied Madelin.

"Then," said Mora, "all my men will be lions."

"Speak to them," said Madelin, "and make them see the thing you say!"

CHAPTER XXXV

THE DAY OF FAITH

THE country was empty. Even had it been filled, and with eager spies, they might have stood a good chance of coming close to the town unobserved. For from the mountains past the center of the plain they followed two shallow ravines, and from these they passed into an irrigation ditch and pressed on; they flowed like silent water toward Nueva Alcantara. Mora had done his work. The negroes realized that they were fighting not for some master's pleasure, but for the sake of the steaming jungle and the cone-shaped hut of their own country. They marched sturdily, with the quiet of resolved men.

It was close, hot work in that canal, for the banks rose high enough to shut away every vestige of a breeze, and they trod underfoot dead weeds which, breaking to dust, filled the air with thin, pungent clouds, like drifting smoke. But they kept their ranks and they kept their silence. There was only one mishap on the way. When they reached a hut built on the very bank of the dry canal a half-breed woman, coming out of the hut, threw up her hands and gaped down at the long procession. She had time neither to scream nor to flee before death flashed toward her out of the shadows in the ditch. An eight-foot javelin, with a long sword-blade as a head, struck her and killed her; she rolled heavily down into the bed of the canal and the column marched on over the dead body.

That was the only unlucky accident. They went on grimly; with only one light heart in the crew, and that, of course, belonged to Billy. He kept whistling a tune with a note too thin and faint to betray them to any listening ears, but loud enough to torment Madelin. He had heard it in his childhood and though he could not bring back the verses at first, they haunted him like bad news, half forgotten but still just around the corner of memory. He stumbled on a stone, and when he straightened again the words of the old ballad tumbled into his brain, with the weird whistle of Billy endlessly enforcing them.

They rowed her in a pair of sheets
And towed her o'er the wa';
But on the point o' Gordon's spear
She gat a deadly fa'.

O bonnie, bonnie was her mouth,
And cherry were her cheiks,
And clear, clear was her yellow hair
Whereon the red blood drieps.

Then wi' his spear he turned her o'er;
O gin her face was wane!
He said: "Ye are the first that e'er
I wished alive again!"

Such were the verses which Madelin sang over again to himself before he stopped, cold with superstition. He said to himself: "I shall never see her again! I shall never see her living again!" And a moment later the scurrying vanguard came back to report that Nueva Alcantara was close at hand.

Billy and Sir Louis went out to spy on the place. And, this, after all, promised to be the most difficult act of the day, but was in reality the simplest. As they slipped from the shelter of one house to another, dreading watching eyes every instant, they found that not a

soul was there—not a soul! The same attraction which had drawn every member of the country farms away from their dwellings had drawn the people from the outskirts of the little town.

Far off, a bell began to ring, a heavy church-bell, and Sir Louis stopped and with his hand resting against a wall, breathed deeply.

“Are you sick?” asked Billy.

“It will pass,” answered Madelin, but he guessed that the devil was about to walk abroad through Nueva Alcantara.

The last stroke of the bell died out; the music passed into a brazen murmur, and this in turn was swelled and prolonged by a human sound from many voices rising before them.

They stood behind a house much taller than others near by, and in a twinkling the well disciplined, naked feet of Billy had carried him to the top. There he crouched; then he stood and presently waved Madelin up beside him. Sir Louis gained the crest of the building and stared across two white roofs to the plaza beyond.

He could see the farther and longer side and part of two other sides; and all of them were solidly packed with people—old men and young, old women and children of every age from that of the infant in arms to the stripling. They were all there—the good folk of Nueva Alcantara and from all of the countryside, farmers and shopkeepers, pedlars and merchants with their families—negroes, Indians, half-breeds, and the Spanish conquistadors and their descendants.

Such was the crowd which fringed the plaza and in the center of it were tall, powerful poles, with great stacks of fagots piled around them, and little platforms built toward the top—oh, if Sir Louis had never heard the name of the Inquisition he might have guessed the meaning of this picture!

But at this same moment another element was added to the picture. At the side of the plaza closest to the church, there appeared a procession of the condemned who were to grace that day's Act of Faith.

All were clad in ankle-length trousers and rude mantles of black striped with white. Over these, the first to appear, as being those who were to endure less awful punishment than others, wore saffron colored habits of sackcloth famous under the name of the *sambenito*, and marked before and behind with the great red cross of St. Andrew. Some, for terrible blasphemies, wore tall miters to denote that they were bankrupt of all heavenly riches. Each carried in his hand a rope which was hung about his neck and a tall taper of green wax was carried in the right hand. There were not many who were thus equipped for the lighter punishments, such as three or a dozen years of slavery, confiscation of lands and goods, and final banishment from the land forever. Behind that meager group came the heart and substance of that day's solemnity. That is to say, those came who were to perish at the stake. The first of this sad procession wore *sambenitos* like the rest but instead of the St. Andrew's cross the mantle was painted over with flames whose heads pointed downward. These were the relapsed heretics who, however, being penitent, received a special grace at the last instant. For having relapsed, they must die, though not with torture, for they were strangled before they were committed to the flames. After the penitents came those upon whom the Holy Office wreaked its utmost vengeance. They were the confessed heretics, impenitent; or those who denied their crimes but were convicted by a sufficient number of witnesses. These wore upon their heads miters covered with painted flames. Their *sambenitos*, also, were painted in the same fashion and here and there, for notorious heretics, artists of more or less skill had been called in to assist in decorating the victim. They

painted the heads of the sufferers surrounded in flames with devils capering about and thrusting the unfortunates deeper into the flames.

These were the significant forms which Sir Louis saw marching toward the plaza. In the lead went a body of Dominican monks, thus honored because their founder had also established the most holy Inquisition, whose banner was carried before the sacred men. It showed the image of St. Dominic supported in clouds. At his feet a dog crouched, holding a torch against a globe. In his right hand he bore the olive branch of mercy; in his left hand he carried a broadsword; and a scroll above his head was inscribed: "*Misericordia et justitia.*" Behind the Dominicans marched those who were condemned to less than death. At their rear the crucifix was carried with its face turned before to indicate mercy to those in its van, and black destruction through eternity was signified by its back being presented to the rest of the column. Then followed those devoted to destruction, while the very rear of the devoted column was occupied by a black coffin painted over with flames. It was filled with the bones of one condemned for heresy five years after his death. His remains had been exhumed, duly denounced and tried, and now he was escorted to do penance in their holy Act of Grace.

It was high noon, with the sun riding fiercely aloft in the center of the sky. But that could not keep back the multitudes in the shadow of the houses. They filled the square and boiled with eagerness when they saw the procession entering. Half a dozen horsemen had to be employed to clear a path for the procession, which passed through a savagely jubilant sea of waving hands and shouting faces.

Sir Louis Madelin saw that the negatives and penitents passed without much persecution, but in the rear there stalked certain forms brightly familiar in his eye—

twoscore and ten of the English buccaneers, looking hardly less fierce now than when they walked the deck of a free ship on the free seas. And as they went by, curses and filth were showered upon them. Huge Peter Solomon, bellowing out a rejoinder, was instantly seized and gagged. And the rabble yelled its delight.

At this, you would have thought that Sir Louis Madelin was a horse tied to a stake and beaten, he writhed and groaned so. "Tell me, Billy," said he, "is not this an excellent day on which to die, and do some killing before the end of us? Because die we must!"

There was a reason that enforced that remark. Yonder near the wall of the houses there was a line of soldiers, and another line farther toward the stakes. All excellent Spanish infantry, than which the world could offer no better fighting men unless it were those same undisciplined wolves who now marched in that procession in fetters.

But Billy made no answer except to point suddenly and say: "They have brought her, too! By God, they have brought even the lady!"

And Sir Louis, who had searched for her all this time with an aching heart, saw her at last, walking just in front of the loftily borne coffin.

Each of the condemned was accompanied upon the one side by a gentle priest, offering holy wisdom to the last moment of life upon this earth; and on the other side, to complete the escort, the church honored some principal citizen of the town by appointing him to go with the sufferer and be seen by the populace on this day of days. So by the one hand of the girl walked a holy father, and on the other hand there strode none other than Don Francisco!

It seemed a very fitting thing to Sir Louis that the Spaniard should appear at the side of the girl whom he had brought, at last, to this death.

He saw her face was as pale as her white feet, which

walked naked over the rough stones of the plaza; but her head was high. And the heart of Sir Louis swelled when he marked that she did not march with the penitents, but like a true Englishwoman, died in the faith in which she had lived.

Then his glance was plucked bodily from the girl by a frightful scream. Yonder the head of the procession had reached the stakes, and four penitents were being strangled. Yet one of these had broken from the restraining hands and uttered this wild shriek as he was seized again—and so the quick string was twisted around his neck, his hands beat at the air for a moment only, and then fell limp —

Sir Louis moved swiftly as he descended the wall of that house toward the yard from which he had climbed, but barefooted Billy was before him, catlike. They raced back through the streets, paying no heed, now, to the chance of being spied out, but only listening to the rising roar of exultation which boomed and swelled in the central square.

So they came past the outskirts of the town and to the canal where, surrounded by not even a wisp of dust, the blacks sweltered patiently in the midday heat.

But Mora leaped out and met the white men with an excited cry.

“Is there time?” cried Mora. “For do you see yonder?”

It was a rapidly rising cloud of dust, like a rolling smoke. It was still at a considerable distance from Nueva Alcantara, perhaps a few miles, but it approached the town at the speed of a trotting horse. And there was no doubt as to its identity. It was a column of that stout cavalry which had been scouring the plain in search of the fugitives, and if it reached the town before Sir Louis and his black men had done their work, they would be caught and ground between an upper and a nether millstone. Sir Louis saw, and acknowl-

edged the peril by the setting of his jaw, but then he drew his sword, and he turned to Mora with the grim joy of one who is itching for action.

“They are all at a game,” said he. “They are all like children playing a game, and we will have those spears in their backs before they know that we are near them!”

CHAPTER XXXVI

SIR LOUIS TO THE RESCUE

TO MAKE all perfect, there should have been the dimness of the dusk. Then the negroes would have been at home—perfectly sure of themselves and their work. But still, as they passed through the silence of the streets of the Spanish town at midday, their nervous side glances stopped. Their confidence rose. They began to feel that it might be truth, and that their leader had brought them to a sweet massacre of helpless white men.

And now they came down a bend of the street and swept into view of the crowded square.

A helpless mob they looked indeed. The lines of soldiery, so apparent to Sir Louis from the top of the house, were now masked completely by the outskirts of the civilian mass. And every black man crouched a little and flashed his white teeth in a smile of joy and clutched his spear the harder, while his eyes sought out a pleasing target.

One more tragedy was being enacted as they mustered swiftly there. It was at this moment that the executioners seized on a poor Jew, an old man from whom a confession had been wrung by the first touch of the torture. He was now in a sick panic of fear, babbling out prayers for mercy as he saw the fires already kindled, clinging to the monk beside him and entreating the small favor of a knife thrust through his

heart before he was given to the fire. He was carried struggling up the ladder and fastened in his place with chains, while a Dominican who mounted the ladder declaimed in a loud voice:

“I leave you to the devil, who is standing at your elbow to receive your soul and carry it with him to the flames of hell-fire so soon as it is freed from your body!”

The monk had no sooner descended than a shout was raised: “Make the dog a beard!”

A burning mass of tow was raised upon the end of the pole and thrust under the face of the victim, while the shriek of the Jew was lost in the wild outcry of the joyous audience. What was the baiting of a bull in the ring compared with this sight? The fire was already kindled at the foot of the stake; the flames rose swiftly, for oil had been poured upon the wood, but the fire did not touch the sufferer. For a steady wind was cutting in from the north above the tops of the houses, and stooping across the plaza, it fanned the flames to one side. Had they reached the body of the Jew they would have suffocated him at once, but as it was, he was subjected to a slow roasting, shrieking, and twisting at the iron chains which held him and wailing: “*Misericordia por amor de Dios!*”

His voice was lost again; that savage sight had merely awakened the taste for blood in the crowd and they began to thunder: “The heretic dogs! The English! The English! The pirate devils to the stake!”

“Now!” shouted Madelin. “Get close and then drive the spears home! Tell them, Mora!”

They needed no telling. They saw their work, and it was beautifully to their liking. Like tenscore black devils they closed on the fringe of that crowd. Not a head had been turned except as the thunder of their last rush began, and then the long, screaming wail plunged across the plaza:

“The negroes! The negroes and Señor Madelin! God protect us!”

Oh, it was sweet to Madelin to be named and known to these people—to be a devil to them! He saw the blacks rush. He saw the flashing of their spears, and then the wild shrieking of men who tried to flee from stabbing steel, but whose flight was barred by the dense confusion which instantly flooded the square.

But Madelin, with Mora and Billy and a score or two of the chosen blacks, fought only to carve his way, and not for vengeance. He came with his men on a little knot of a dozen Spanish infantry who had put back to back and made themselves an island, refusing to be washed adrift by the rout and the confusion. The delicate point of Sir Louis’ smallsword was instantly through the beard of the sergeant and deep in his throat. He fell backward, struggling, and knocked two men to their knees. Under the arm of Sir Louis, Billy, like an active cat, slid out and his knife was in the heart of one. The brutal club of Mora dashed out the brains of the third man.

So Sir Louis expertly opened a way into that cluster of brawny fighting men, and having cracked the hard shell of their formation, they were instantly trampled to death by the pressure of the black men.

And these, having tasted white blood in a torrent, now, were raging mad for battle.

But still Sir Louis pressed steadily forward toward that portion of the square, near the stakes, where the English had been stationed, a stride or two from a dreadful death. And he saw, on a tall platform like a lofty throne, the form of the chief inquisitor, standing, now, his arms extended, his face uplifted, praying for the hand of the Lord to descend upon the heretics.

“Pray well, Spaniard,” said Sir Louis, “for English steel is coming toward you—oh, God, bring me quickly to my men ——”

To that odd prayer there was an instant answer. For a vast voice bellowed through the noise of the crowd:

“Courage, hearts! A rescue! Madelin, Madelin to the rescue!”

Peter Solomon had worked the gag from his throat, and now his huge voice was like a flare of light to Madelin showing him the way.

A little more—a little pressing—a little shoving and hewing, and then the crowd peeled suddenly back and showed a core of the good Spanish infantry—a thin, glittering line of armored men between the buccaneers and Sir Louis’ blacks. Had they been in good order —

But no, the pressure of that crowd had knocked the soldiery into confusion. It was a solid line, and through the gaps the negroes poured instantly. Ten Spaniards in line could have held a hundred blacks at bay, yet man for man, a black was as good as a Spaniard. Or even a little better, now that they fought with victory glinting just before their eyes. Lunging spear-points found the naked places on those bodies, where the breastplate gave no security; and the dint of the mighty clubs cracked the sturdy morions. Down went that line of Spaniards, or was sent shuddering away into the dying safety of the crowd.

Instantly knives were at work in freeing the buccaneers. The hand of Sir Louis was on the immense muscles which padded the shoulder of Peter Solomon.

“Where’s an axe? Where’s an axe?” moaned Solomon. “I must be at ’em—”

“Peter, Peter, for God’s love, stay with me. There is an English girl, yonder, and the dogs have carried her safely away. Help me to her, Peter!”

“I’ll die for you, lad, and die laughing. Oh, but here’s a different song singing now! We have time—we have time!”

“No time, Peter. D’you hear me, man! The sol-

diery in the plaza—yes, plenty of time for them, but Spanish cavalry is already almost on us. How shall we stand a charge of mounted men ——”

“Bah!” snarled Peter Solomon. “I hate to be disturbed at my meat! Lead, Sir Louis. I am a biting dog at your heels. All English hearts, this way! Ho, for Madelin! This way! This way!”

Twoscore and seven English hands, twoscore and seven English hearts and cheering throats. And with each, a cool fighting brain, now famine-sharp with malice. And there were weapons to spare. The ground was covered, and each man could pick and choose. A club for one, a rapier for another, a cutlass for a third—all with the pistols which they loved so well stuck into their clothes. Many a musket was caught up, to be used with a frightful accuracy; but mostly it was terrible hand to hand work, for all those English bellies were empty, hollow, and needed filling with solid vengeance such as they could taste and remember afterward.

They gathered to the shout of Solomon like wolves to the bay of the leader. Here and there, a wild, haggard unshaven face flashed at Madelin with terrible, joyous recognition. They loved him. Not that he had saved their lives, but that he had freed their hands and turned them loose on the foe.

How sweet to have this one moment, even if death came swiftly upon the heels of it!

They crossed that plaza like reapers wading through tall grain. Behind and to the sides, the negroes howled and shrieked louder than their victims, and killed with a fury, but the English worked with only an occasional deep shout—but ever striding forward.

They are the ponderous bevel and the great blade and the weighted backing of the axe-head—but the cutting and the splitting edge is Sir Louis Madelin, twisting and dancing and springing in and out in the point of that wedge of men. The passageway that he opens

is instantly widened by the terrible knife of Billy on the one hand, or by the dreadful axe of Solomon on the other. So that human wedge clove to the foot of the scaffold on which the chief inquisitor had his station, his arms outspread, showering down the divine curse upon the heretics.

In the mouth of Peter Solomon, the taste of the gag was fresh and very foul. He dropped his axe for an instant and tore up a great paving stone. Twice he swayed it back and forth to collect his might, and then he loosed it at the emaciated form of the young Spaniard. It crushed him down and hurled him over the edge of the scaffold, and the reaching pike of a negro lunged at the falling body —

Under heavy pounding, the chaff is worked and blown away and the grain remains.

Don Francisco had no power to gather his soldiery and bear the girl away from the plaza. But he could bring them close around him and so have them in hand when the final attack was to be delivered. And when the panting, laughing, rejoicing Englishmen worked through the crowd, in the end, and when the civilians had fled screaming on either side, with the bounding negroes leaping and yelling in pursuit, they found before them score on score of steady-handed infantry—still the finest infantry in the world.

Now they had room, they were reforming as fast as they could, each man stepping steadily and swiftly into a formation, each man leveling his pike outward as fast as he got to his place—a bristling wall of pikes in good array, with the wall of the house of the Inquisition just behind, and in the center, a leader whom they knew and loved and respected—that famous Don Francisco.

Sir Louis Madelin saw all of this but it was little to him. He hardly cared what men and arms were against him. He only knew that yonder was Don Francisco, and that at his shoulder was the white face of the girl.

He gripped the arm of Solomon. It was like laying hand upon a vast ship's cable.

"Do you see, Peter?"

"I am at your side, Madelin. We'll have them ——"

Ay, but even as they rushed, the wall of bright steel pikes formed across, between the English and the girl and the Spanish knight. They recoiled before that deadly barrier. And behind the pikes the pistols and the muskets were barking.

Sir Louis never knew the name of the buccaneer who did the thing. He leaped forward with a wild yell and threw himself upon the pikes. Here, there and again, half a dozen were through his naked body, but his fall beat down their points and through that narrow alley of safety leaped a winged thunderbolt—Sir Louis Madelin with the darting rapier in his hand. It flashed, and a soldier fell—and then Peter Solomon in one stride was beside him.

Blood dripped from the arms of Peter like soapy water from the elbows of a washwoman when she raises her arms. And in the hands of Peter there was waved a tremendous engine—an executioner's axe, meant to shear off heads at a single stroke even when wielded by normal arms. But in the hands of Solomon, it quivered lightly with the strength of his grip!

On either side of that gap the Spaniards curled away, as a sail curls rapidly and splits to shreds when the wind has once cracked it. So the Spaniards dropped and the English brushed them away; and the girl was now not more than a single hope away from Sir Louis when he heard a frantic clamor of terror from the throats of the negroes to the rear and on their flanks.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OFF FOR ENGLAND

THE snorting and the trampling of horses told Madelin that the Spanish horse had arrived on the edge of the plaza, or without looking over his shoulder he could have guessed what had happened by the soldiery that stood still under the house of the Inquisition, for they were radiant with joy. They rallied, if not in a solid line, then in savagely fighting clusters.

The largest of those clusters had for its heart the white face of the girl, and there was Francisco de la Vega fighting in its front rank. He had put on a common soldier's morion and breastplate and in his hand he wielded a great two-handed sword, making it dance above the heads of his enemies. He cut the way, right and left, and the crowded infantry pressed out, and as they gained that precious and much needed space, they formed swiftly into the order which made them ten-fold more formidable.

Sir Louis Madelin, seeing this, dropped to one knee and threw toward heaven an empty and an armed hand.

"God of Englishmen," said Sir Louis, "look down on an Englishman and a king's knight. Let me die, but save the girl."

He rose, brushed the long hair away from his ugly face, and went in to the attack, barefooted, like a sailor. And now that the high heels no longer raised him, he looked hardly bigger than a child. But Peter Solomon and crafty Cunningham knew that there was lightning

in the hand of that child. At his one shoulder stroke Solomon and the dread axe. On the other hand went Cunningham armed with a simple machete with which he carved morions as another man might carve cheese. And behind this forward trio stepped Billy with his fatal knife.

But oh, to have seen Sir Louis Madelin on that great day as he fought toward the tossing broadsword of his enemy. In his hand the small-sword played like the gleaming bill of a humming bird which darts into the hearts of flowers faster than the eye can note. As the musket went to the shoulder, as the butt hung in mid-air for the stroke, as the sword swayed at the head of the little Englishman, a pin-prick stung them to the heart, and they crumbled into the bloody dust, while the slayer stepped lightly forward.

Forward and forward—and suddenly the broadsword was before him and only Francisco de la Vega between him and the woman of his heart!

What passed in the heart of brave Don Francisco then?

He measured with an eye of agony the distance between him and this dreadful enemy; and then the distance at which the rescue labored heavily across the plaza in the persons of those sluggish Spanish riders. So he turned and in a long second he took his last look at Mary Winton and drank a heart full of her beauty. She was holding out her hands, past Don Francisco. She was weeping with joy and with excitement and reaching her hand toward the English knight.

The heavy blade of Don Francisco struck downright at the head of Sir Louis, but that creature of wind and swift feathers swayed from the falling danger. His own thrust was like the play of a cat's-paw, and a pang of fire burned in the right arm of Don Francisco. His sword fell from his numbed fingers. But with his left hand he drew his dagger and strove to spring in. But

the wasp-sting flashed and stabbed again, and where he was hurt he knew not, except that this was his last moment on earth. As he fell, he saw the English face above him, trembling with labor and with victory.

"Sir Louis, for the sake of honor—let me see her once more ——"

"Dog!" said Louis Madelin, "you would have stood by and seen her burn!"

And he stepped on, and as he stepped, Billy stooped behind him, and struck, and passed on.

Now one step, and Sir Louis Madelin was no longer a hero, but a trembling man, a weak, weak man clasping a girl in his arms, and she clasping him, and both regardless of the danger that was pouring upon them.

For the horsemen were thronging to the attack, spurring deep the jaded flanks of their horses, with the sun blinding bright upon their swords. And had it not been that there was a lion and a tiger and a wolf in that crew of buccaneers, it had been the end of them all. The lion and the wolf turned and flung themselves on the cavalry as it struck the shrieking negroes in the rear; and the tiger battered open a way of retreat.

That was Cunningham, the wolf, and Lang, the lion, raging at the front ranks of the riders; and that was Peter Solomon with his dreadful axe battering at the gate of the house of the Inquisition. Dust and loosened stones showered back upon him and a black-robed monk above the gate hurled down a dreadful curse in due clerical form—but the gate was only wood and iron, and against it worked flesh and steel. The lock was battered, broken, and burst open. The groaning of the hinges called the fugitives to shelter.

Oh, they came fast enough! But even the hysterical flood of the fleeing negroes could not stop Solomon as he strode through the mass of them. He came to Madelin and the girl, and he caught them with one massive arm.

"Is this April weather for two young fools?" said Peter Solomon. And then he crushed open a way for them, battering strong men to right and to left, and brought them safely through the crowded gates.

Peter Solomon, red to the elbows and streaked and spotted with horror, reeling with his labor, dragged Madelin a little to the side.

"Are you sane, now? Can you think for us again? We are in a trap, man. What now?"

"The house is a fort."

"We can never hold it. There are not forty of us, now, and a hundred black faces too scared to fight."

That was true enough, and the sound of Nueva Alcantara was like the sound of a storm-swept sea when it breaks on a cliff-face. But if the mind of Sir Louis was a whirling mist and if Cunningham and great Peter Solomon could give no help, yonder was Lang, the true leader, whose thought would ever work in the van.

"This house of the devil sits on the bank of the river, and there are boats in that water. And yonder are the three masts of a tall ship. Now, lads, is not every Englishman ten men when he stands on a deck? And is it not better to die on God's ocean than on Spanish land?"

He did not know that it was the *Santa Maria* stacked with the very treasure which had been recovered from them. Ay, and more treasure still added to it. For what other purpose would so great a ship linger here save to carry things of great import back to old Spain?

"Luck is with us!" snarled Martin Gunn from one side of his mouth, for a musket ball had scorched his other cheek. "And the fewer we are the richer we are! There is our ship smiling at us, lads! I can feel the wheel of her kicking in my hand already."

And so, in thirty seconds, from the river doors the buccaneers and the blacks boiled out like wasps from a hive, just when the good townsmen and the soldiers

made certain by their own weariness that the English and the blacks were tired to death of labor on that day!

Fifty yards of ground and wharf between the house of the Inquisition and the side of the *Santa Maria*, rising like a fortress wall where thirty men should have been able to keep her against three hundred. But the crew did not wait for even the first shock since, though willing to fight men, they had no desire to meet devils like these! They dived for the river on the farther side of the ship, and Martin Gunn, whose long legs carried him like a grayhound over the wharf, was first up the side to an empty deck!

Sure, Madelin would not have been the last aboard had it not been for Mary Winton. To lighten her way, she had torn off the painted sackcloth mantle which encumbered her, and she ran like the wind, with the red-gold of her hair blown out behind her head. But she could not keep pace with the racing men, and when the roused Spanish horse spurred in from either side it seemed that they would close on Madelin and the girl, after all.

Then one of the fugitives whirled and raced past the knight and his lady. It was Billy, knife in hand. And he flew like a fighting dog at the rider who towered above Madelin and the girl for the sword stroke. He changed his aim at Billy and the youngster swerved—but just too late. The blow found him. But Billy leaped on. One hand caught the shoulder of the Spaniard. With the other he drove his knife beneath the man's armpit.

Then Billy was back at the side of Madelin and the girl, all his left side covered with blood.

I suppose that even that sacrifice could not have saved Madelin, but on the ship Martin Gunn had primed a cannon—not to do mischief with it, but to celebrate his arrival and that of his mates in this promised land. He flashed his pistol at the priming, and

the gun roared heavily. It sent a dark round ball hurtling over the heads of those eager Spanish riders and with that shot the battle ended. They had not come out to charge fortresses. And dreading the broadside which might follow, they turned and rode for their lives. In the meantime, Lang and Solomon themselves were hacking the huge cables that held the ship in place. Presently she swung around in the current, and went drifting almost sidewise down the stream.

This was that most strange taking of the *Santa Maria*; such was the delivery of the English, which to this day has remained in the town of Nueva Alcantara as a miracle sent upon the town for its sins. There was still a chance for the recovery of the ship. Two periaguas were indeed manned and pushed in pursuit, but fortune remained kind to the buccaneers, for a half gale sprang up off the land and bowled her away to sea at a round pace which oars could not follow; when evening fell nothing but blue sea rolled around them, saving for the cloudy forms of the *cordilleras* high and far to the east.

That night in Nueva Alcantara was a scene of wild lament for the dead. They gained a small revenge by flinging the dead English and negroes on the fires which had been built for the celebration of the Act of Faith. They laid Panfilo de la Vega in state in the nave of the church where all could come to look and marvel at his wonderfully emaciated face and the sweet peace which rested upon it in death. Don Francisco was carried to his house and his mother and young Don Hernando watched all that night till the dawn, without tears, and with no sound in that room except, now and again, the faint fluttering of the flames of the great tapers, while the melted wax dripped and congealed around their base.

But on the *Santa Maria* all was wild revel. The rolling of the clumsy vessel had sent the negroes below

and kept them silent with nausea, but the privateers made amends. Three casks of rare wines were broached in the waist of the galleon and their songs and shouts struck far across the black waters, and the light of their lanterns glistened on the heaps of the reclaimed treasure which had been carried up from the hold to feast their eyes. But on the poop of the ship were three in silence. They were Billy, who had vowed with many great oaths that he would not die in darkness but with the stars on his face, and Mary Winton with his head pillowed in her lap while Sir Louis Madelin sat near by with the coal glowing in his old clay pipe. So they waited, listening to the faint, irregular breathing of the boy, waiting for death to take him. He had been cloven through the shoulder and had lost enough blood to kill two men, as Martin Gunn averred. But still he would not die. Once he wakened from a fainting fit to tell them that black waves were rising around his brain and that if he sank beneath them he was lost like any ship at sea. Once again he said, clasping their hands weakly:

“Hold hard, mates; bring me ashore!”

But finally he seemed to forget all about Sir Louis. He asked Mary Winton to give him both her hands, which he kept with his grip pulsing and waning as his life fluttered and failed in his breast.

“Because,” he whispered, when she leaned above him, weeping, “if you saved Sir Louis from the devil, you can save me, too!”

After that, when his fingers fell away altogether, she thought he passed at last, but when they fumbled at his bandaged breast they found that there was still a faint stirring of the heart. The moon rose and looked down at them there, smoothing the sea to a quiet swell so that its white path could reach them.

“I heard him speak,” said Madelin at last. “But will you believe that I am changed, Mary?”

"Did you need changing, Louis?" she asked him.

"You have not forgotten the cabin of the Spanish ship where I played judge," he answered. "I judged you in words, but you judged me in silence."

"Yes," said she. "That day I thought you were the wickedest man in the whole world."

"And now?" asked Madelin.

"Oh, yes," said Mary Winton. "I know that all the evil that was in you then is still in you."

"Mary," he groaned, "I will swear to you ——"

"Hush!" said she. "You must not swear. I saw you fight to-day. And I could not tell whether you were a dreadful demon or a splendid angel, Louis, when you leaped among the men, and they fell before you, and you stepped on their dead bodies to strike again."

"Neither angel nor devil, Mary, but simple Louis Madelin, a man who loves Mary Winton so much that he could have pushed through stone walls to come to her."

"Pushed through stone walls—or sacked towns and burned them—and raided ships and drenched them with blood. Oh, Louis, now that you sit here, seeming so small and so gentle and so weak I want to tell only one thing."

"Say it, then, in God's name!"

"I shall. I love you! No, you must not touch me! I love you until I close my eyes and you turn into a giant, crushing heads and crushing hearts. How can I love you and fear you so much?"

He bowed his head. "I have no right to plead," said he. "And will you care, Mary?"

"Hush," she said, "I think he stirred. Pray for him, Louis. He saved us both as surely as you saved me!"

The moon rose high; Billy slept on; and great weariness bowed the girl's head at last. Madelin came to her softly as a shadow and in her sleep he drew her head

upon his shoulder and supported her with his arm. One hand lay upon his knee, palm up, very white in the moonshine, and he wondered greatly over it—the beauty and the slender grace—and that so small a thing should have taken his heart and kept it.

Once she stirred restlessly and moaned like a sick child. “Hush!” said Madelin, whispering. “All is well. There is nothing under heaven to fear, for God is with us.” Then he kissed her, and she smiled and slept.

A sharp anguish of joy began to rise and swell and ache in him. It filled his heart, it choked his throat, it stung his eyes until the tears rolled down his face. For he knew as though omniscience were in him that the boy would live, and that Mary would waken to love him and with all her heart.

A drunken sailor went past him to take the wheel, growling out the last of a ditty; but when he saw the group, he went by them on tiptoe. The ship became quiet, saving now and then for the rush and whisper of a bow-wave curling down the side. In the waist the buccaneers slept with their flagons in their grimy hands. Their wounds grew cold and stiff unheeded. The gold spilled from twenty sacks upon the boards and as the moon rose higher, silvering the broad yellow pieces, it became dim—a ghost of money—the Dew of Heaven, indeed!

THE END





